

STORY BY KYO SHIRODAIRA ART BY CHASHIBA KATASE



IN/SPECTRE

5



IN/SPECTRE

5

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I WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO WIN THIS.

I WILL PUT ALL OF MY POWER INTO THESE LIES.

I WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO WIN THIS.

I WILL PUT ALL OF MY POWER INTO THESE LIES.

**THE
COMMITTEE
TO CONQUER
STEEL LADY
NANASE IS
NOW IN
SESSION.**

TKKA

TKKA-TK-K

**TKKA-
TK**

TKKA

Steel Lady Nanase really!

[illegible]

THE
COMMITTEE
TO CONQUER
STEEL LADY
NANASE IS
NOW IN
SESSION.

TKKA-TK-K

TKKA-TK

TKKA

TKKA

Steel Lady Nanase really

[illegible][illegible]

THE
COMMITTEE
TO CONQUER
STEEL LADY
NANASE IS
NOW IN
SESSION.

TKKA

TKKA-UK-K

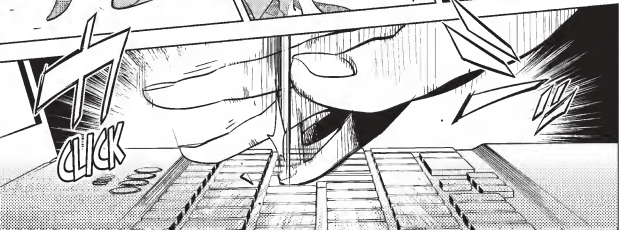
TKKA-TK

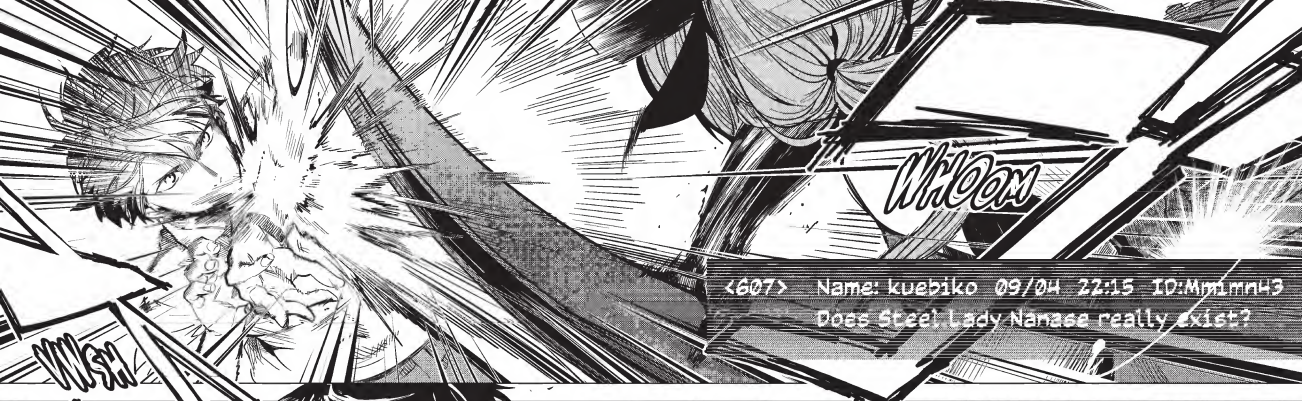
TKKA

TKKA

TKKA

Steel Lady Nanase really





<607> Name: kuebiko 09/04 22:15 ID:MmimnH3
Does Steel Lady Namase really exist?



Maybe she only exists as a made-up phantom
imagined by some charlatan for a hoax.
Maybe she's really just an urban legend.



SAKI-SAN.



SO FAR HE'S MANAGED TO KEEP HER BUSY WITHOUT HAVING TO GET HIMSELF KILLED.

OKAY.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU NOTICE ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN KURŌ-SENPAI'S FIGHTING.

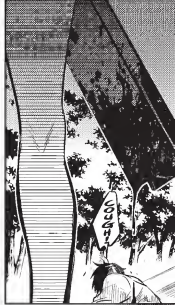




<608> Name: kuebiko 09/04 22:16 ID:Mmimn43

Up until yesterday, all the reports of Steel Lady Nanase were along the lines of, "I was attacked," "I saw her," "Someone told me she attacked them," etc. There were new rumors and witness reports practically every day, but they were no different from the average urban legend.

POPOP



POP
/ 10

But today's report was very different.
A detective named Terada was murdered by someone
assumed to be Steel Lady Nanase.



FOR SOME-
ONE OF HIS
MASSIVE
BULK AND
JUDO
TRAINING,

DETECTIVE
TERADA
WAS
KILLED
WITH AS-
TOUNDING
EASE.

THE
POLICE
HAVE
STATED
THAT THE
FACIAL
INJURY
WAS THE
CAUSE OF
DEATH.

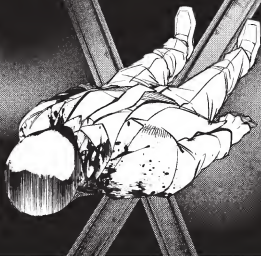


Active Duty
Detective
Found Dead

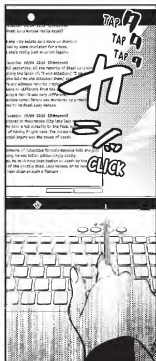
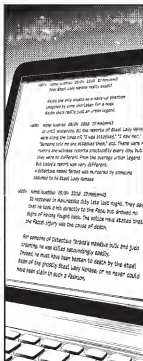
IT
HAPPENED IN
MAKURAZAKA
CITY
LATE
LAST
NIGHT.

THEY SAY
THAT HE
TOOK A HIT
DIRECTLY TO
THE FACE,
BUT THERE
WAS NO
INDICATION
THAT HE HAD
FOUGHT BACK.

...OR HE
NEVER
COULD
HAVE BEEN
SLAIN IN
SUCH A
FASHION.



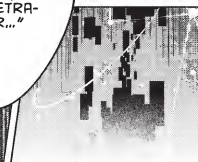
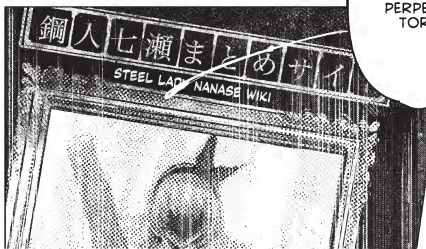
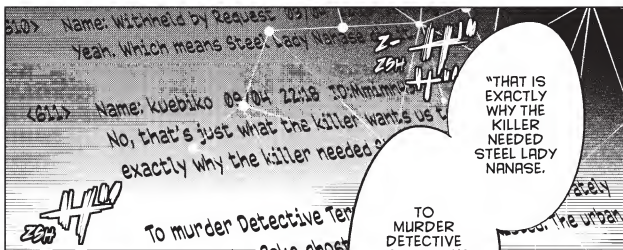
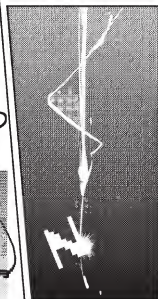
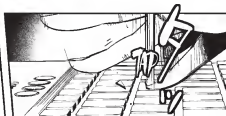
INDEED, HE
MUST HAVE
BEEN BEATEN
TO DEATH BY
THE STEEL
BEAM OF THE
GHOSTLY
STEEL LADY
NANASE...



Indeed, he must have been beaten to death by the steel beam of the ghostly Steel Lady Nanase, or he never could have been slain in such a fashion.

<610> Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:18 ID:mvtgFdx
Yeah. Which means Steel Lady Nanase did it, right?

POP!!

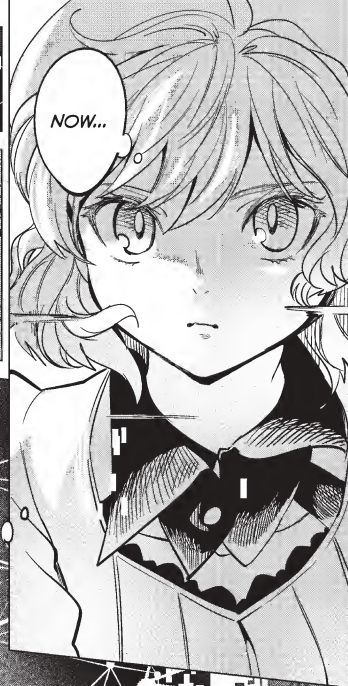
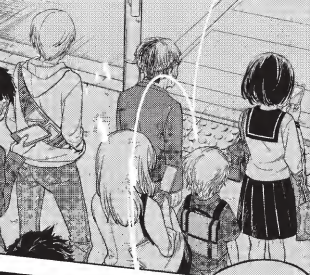




"THE
URBAN
LEGEND
THAT IS
STEEL LADY
NANASE."



"... DELIB-
ERATELY
INVENTED
A FAKE
GHOST—ONE
THAT NEVER
EXISTED:"



NOW...



KZH

ZH

HOW
MANY OF
THEM ARE
GOING TO
BUY THIS?

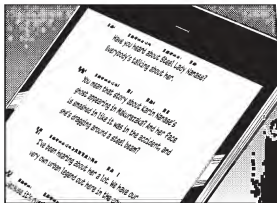
Z-
Z-
ZSH



HE WAS SO GOOD THAT HE WAS ABLE TO RECOGNIZE A POTENTIALLY BIG CASE BEFORE IT GOT OUT OF HAND."

"HE KEPT A WATCHFUL EYE OUT FOR ANY CHANGES IN HIS CITY, AND WAS QUICK TO DISCOVER ANY HINT OF A CRIME."

"DETECTIVE TERADA WAS A MODEL DETECTIVE."



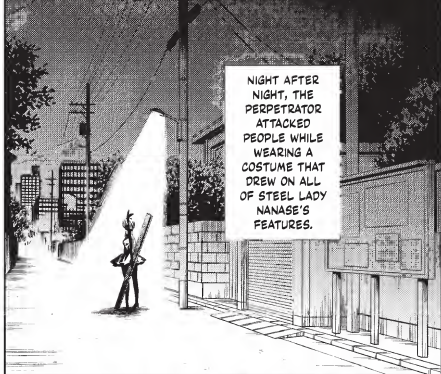
"THE KILLER USED THAT TO THEIR ADVANTAGE."

AND USED THE URBAN LEGEND OF STEEL LADY NANASE TO COMMIT A SERIES OF REAL-LIFE ATTEMPTED ASSAULTS."

"THE KILLER FOUND THE CORNER OF THE INTERNET WHERE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THE MONSTER OF MAKURAZAKA,



OF COURSE,
THEY HAD NO
INTENTION
OF REALLY
HURTING
ANYONE—
THEY ONLY
MEANT TO
SCARE THEM.

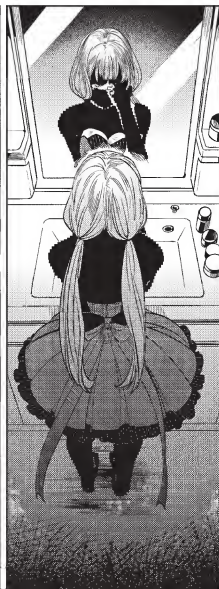
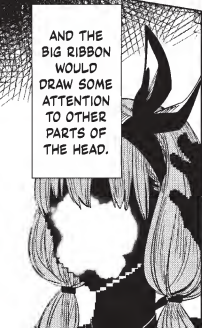


NIGHT AFTER
NIGHT, THE
PERPETRATOR
ATTACKED
PEOPLE WHILE
WEARING A
COSTUME THAT
DREW ON ALL
OF STEEL LADY
NANASE'S
FEATURES.

IN THE
DARK, BLACK
PAINT WOULD
BE ENOUGH
TO ERASE
SOMEONE'S
FACE.

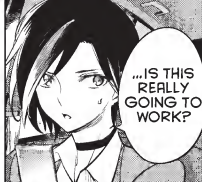


AND THE
BIG RIBBON
WOULD
DRAW SOME
ATTENTION
TO OTHER
PARTS OF
THE HEAD.



THEY MADE
A GIRDER OUT
OF WOOD OR
STYROFOAM,
AND
RECREATED
HER
CONSPICUOUS
BOSOM WITH
SOME KIND
OF PADDING.





...IS THIS
REALLY
GOING TO
WORK?



IT
MIGHT
NOT.

THESE
ARE ALL
LIES,
AFTER
ALL.

BUT IF IT
SEEMS
PLAUSIBLE,

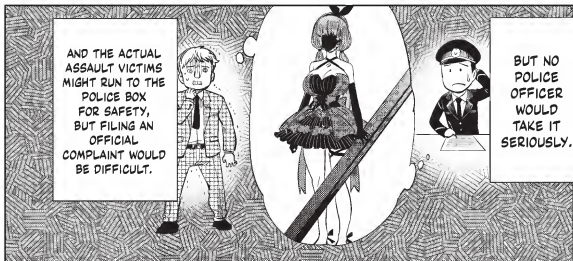


THAT'S
GOOD
ENOUGH.

<630> Name: kuebiko 09/04 22:25 ID:Mmimn43



Then people would start talking, saying things like, "I was attacked by Steel Lady Nanase!" and the killer then waited for the rumors to spread beyond the internet and local gossip, until they made it to the police.



AND THE ACTUAL
ASSAULT VICTIMS
MIGHT RUN TO THE
POLICE BOX
FOR SAFETY,
BUT FILING AN
OFFICIAL
COMPLAINT WOULD
BE DIFFICULT.

BUT NO
POLICE
OFFICER
WOULD
TAKE IT
SERIOUSLY.

BUILDING:
MAKURAZAKA POLICE STATION

STEEL
LADY NANASE
AGAIN? THERE'S
SOMETHING
ABOUT THESE
CASES...

NEVERTHELESS,
THIS WOULD
FORM A PATTERN
OF SUSPICIOUS
INCIDENTS IN
OUR BRAVE
DETECTIVE'S CITY.
SURELY, HE
WOULD TRY TO
FIND OUT WHAT'S
BEHIND THEM.

STILL,
IT'S NOT
LIKE HE
BELIEVED
IN GHOSTS.

SO
DETECTIVE
TERADA
WAS ON THE
MOVE.

KAS
CHAK

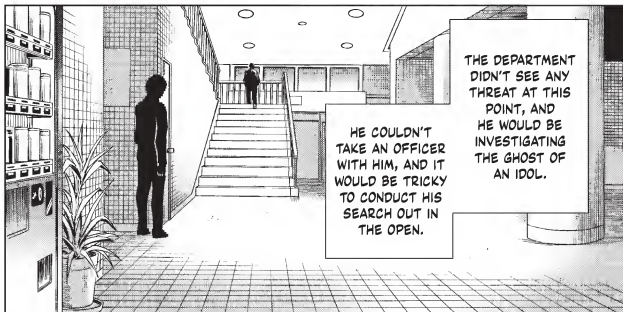
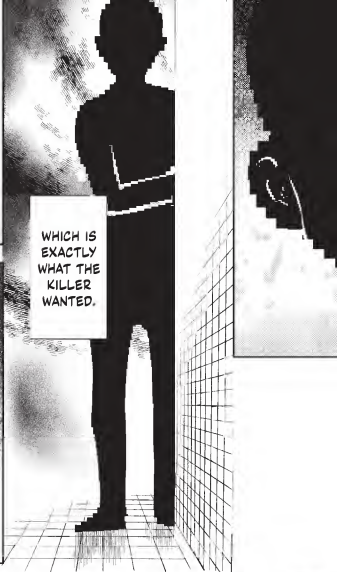
THIS
CAN'T BE
JUST SOME
PRACTICAL
JOKE. THEY
MUST HAVE
SOMETHING
CRIMINAL
IN MIND.

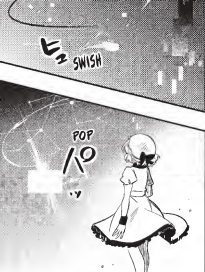
BASED
ON ALL
THE WORK
THAT'S
GOING INTO IT,

MAYBE
SOMEONE IS
PRETENDING
TO BE THIS
"MONSTER
OF URBAN
LEGEND."

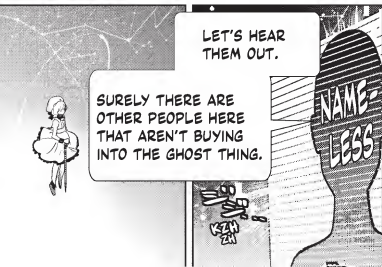
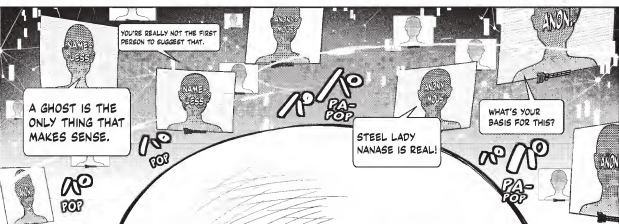
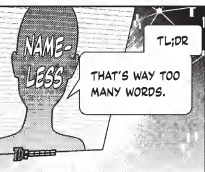
THEY'RE
USING STEEL
LADY NANASE
IN SOME SORT
OF PLOT.

FOLLOWING HIS
SUSPICIONS,
HE BEGAN AN
INDEPENDENT
INVESTIGATION.





"NOW THE
PERP COULD
GET THE
DETECTIVE
ALONE ANY
TIME THEY
WANTED."

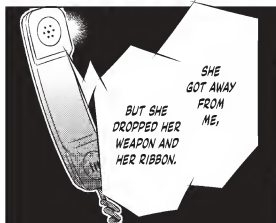




TERADA-SAN!
I...I WAS JUST
ATTACKED BY
STEEL LADY
NANASE!



WHAT'S
UP?



SHE
GOT AWAY
FROM
ME,

BUT SHE
DROPPED HER
WEAPON AND
HER RIBBON.

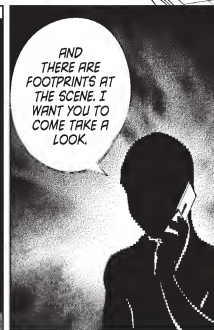


"THEN,
THE KILLER
CALLED
DETECTIVE
TERADA."

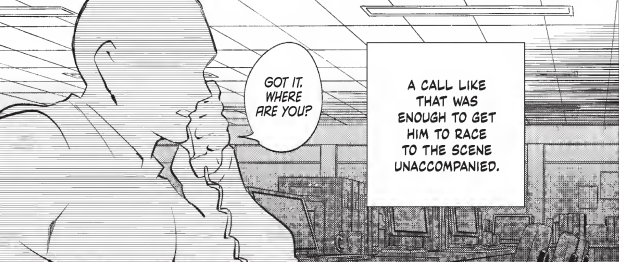


AND
COME
ALONE.

BUT I STILL
DON'T KNOW
WHAT WE
COULD LEARN
FROM THIS,
SO DON'T TELL
ANYONE.

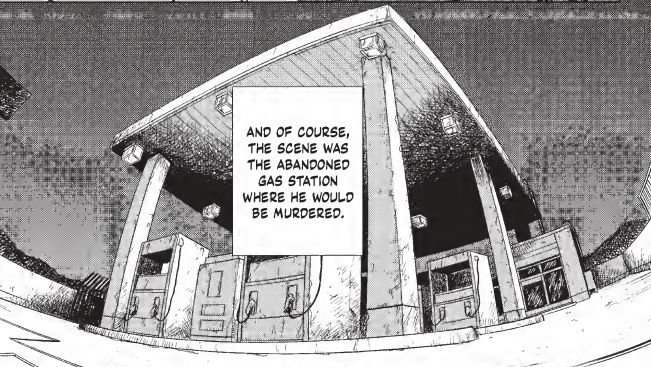


AND
THERE ARE
FOOTPRINTS AT
THE SCENE. I
WANT YOU TO
COME TAKE A
LOOK.



GOT IT.
WHERE
ARE YOU?

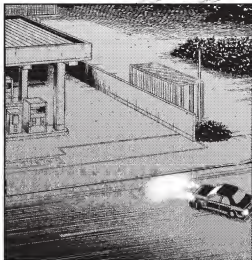
A CALL LIKE
THAT WAS
ENOUGH TO GET
HIM TO RACE
TO THE SCENE
UNACCOMPANIED.



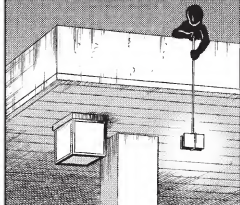
AND OF COURSE,
THE SCENE WAS
THE ABANDONED
GAS STATION
WHERE HE WOULD
BE MURDERED.



YEAH,
THAT
MIGHT
HAVE
GOTTEN
TERADA-
SAN TO
THE GAS
STATION,
BUT...



THAT'S
WHERE THE
KILLER SET
UP A LARGE
PENDULUM.



ONE THING
ALL GAS
STATIONS
HAVE IN
COMMON
IS A HIGH,
FLAT ROOF.



BEFORE
THE DE-
TECTIVE
ARRIVED,

THE KILLER
HAD SET
A TRAP
FOR HIM.



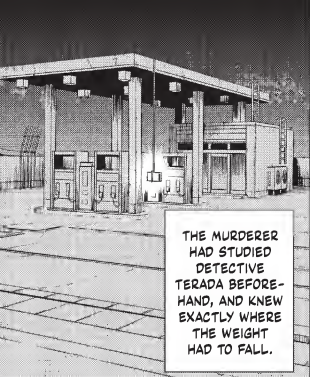
THEY
ATTACHED
A HOOK TO
THE ROOF,
AND TIED
A ROPE
TO IT,

WITH A
WEIGHT
HANGING
AT THE
OTHER
END.



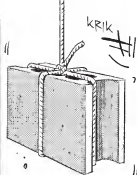
CLANG
カ
ニ
CLANG
カ
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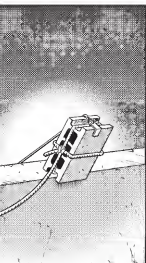


THE MURDERER
HAD STUDIED
DETECTIVE
TERADA BEFORE-
HAND, AND KNEW
EXACTLY WHERE
THE WEIGHT
HAD TO FALL.

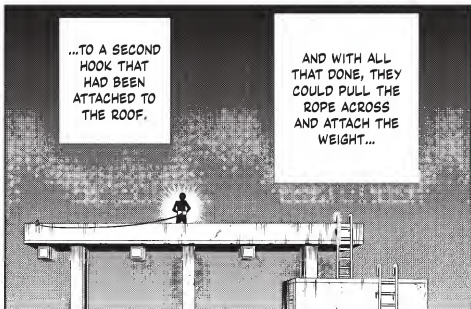
THIS
WEIGHT
HAD TO
BE HEAVY
ENOUGH...



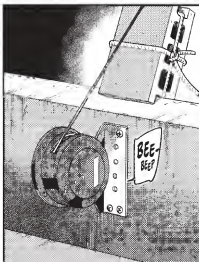
...TO CRUSH
A PERSON'S
SKULL WITH
ONE SWING.



...TO A SECOND
HOOK THAT
HAD BEEN
ATTACHED TO
THE ROOF.



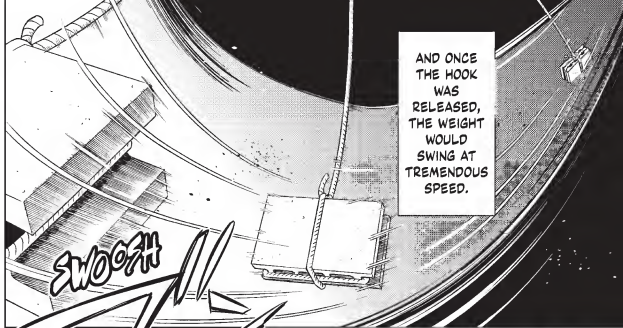
AND WITH ALL
THAT DONE, THEY
COULD PULL THE
ROPE ACROSS
AND ATTACH THE
WEIGHT...



...WAS
DESIGNED
TO BE
UNLATCHED
REMOTELY,
AT THE PRESS
OF A BUTTON.

BUT
THIS
HOOK...





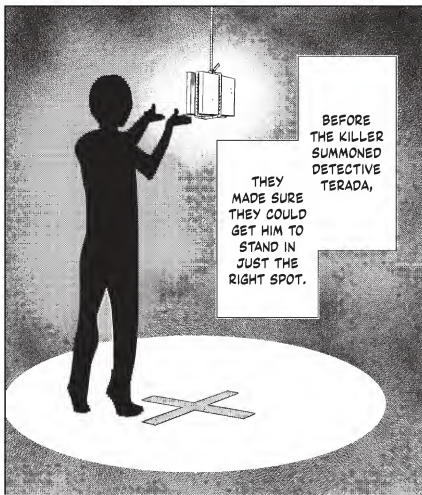
AND ONCE
THE HOOK
WAS
RELEASED,
THE WEIGHT
WOULD
SWING AT
TREMENDOUS
SPEED.

THE HOOK WAS RELEASED AT THE UNEXPECTED MOMENT, AND
THE WEIGHT WOULD SWING AT
TREMENDOUS SPEED.

TAK 77 *can some asshole by Request 08/04 12:58 I'd be surprised if I*
TAK 77 *my wife would go to all that trouble for a murder?*
TAK 77 *that's pretty serious*

TAK 77 *can some asshole by Request 08/04 12:58 I'd be surprised if I*
TAK 77 *my wife would go to all that trouble for a murder?*
TAK 77 *that's pretty serious*

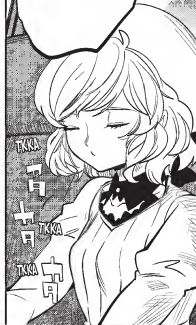
110 PA-POP



BEFORE
THE KILLER
SUMMONED
DETECTIVE
TERADA,

THEY
MADE SURE
THEY COULD
GET HIM TO
STAND IN
JUST THE
RIGHT SPOT.

THAT'S
A LOT OF
WORK JUST
TO KILL A
PERSON...



TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

TAKA

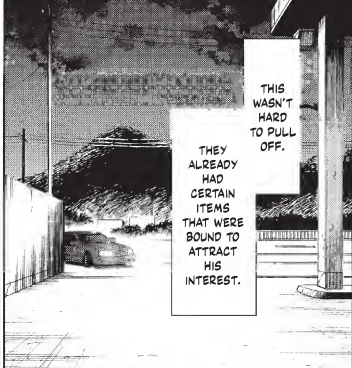
TAKA

TAKA



THEY JUST
HAD TO WAIT
AT THE GAS
STATION,
ITEMS IN
HAND,

AND WHEN
DETECTIVE
TERADA DROVE
UP, HE WOULD
STOP HIS CAR
CLOSE TO THE
KILLER.



THIS
WASN'T
HARD
TO PULL
OFF.

THEY
ALREADY
HAD
CERTAIN
ITEMS
THAT WERE
BOUND TO
ATTRACT
HIS
INTEREST.

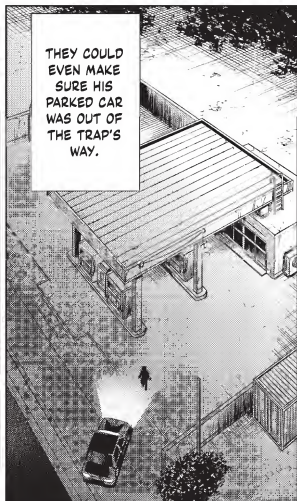
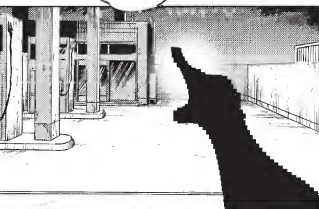


TEP
TEP



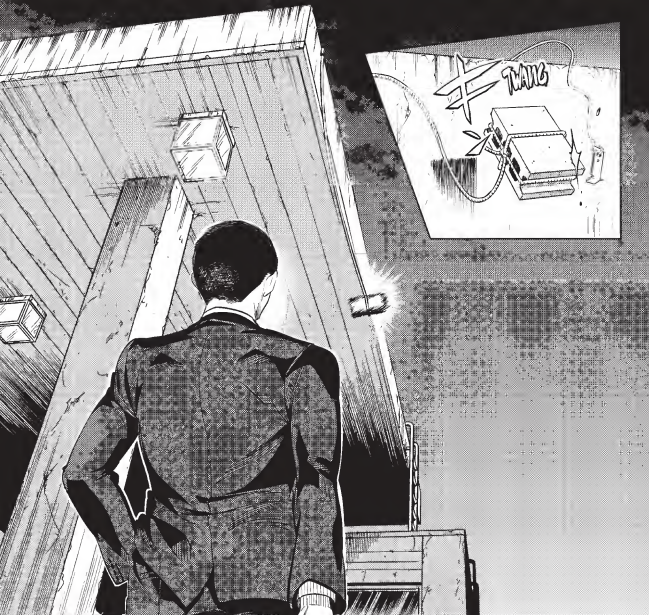
HERE'S THE
RIBBON SHE
DROPPED.

AND THE
FOOTPRINTS
ARE RIGHT
OVER THERE.



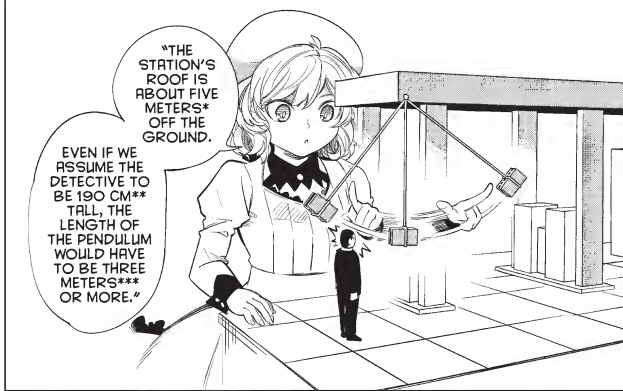
THEY COULD
EVEN MAKE
SURE HIS
PARKED CAR
WAS OUT OF
THE TRAP'S
WAY.





"AND
DETECTIVE
TERADA WAS
STANDING
DIRECTLY IN
ITS PATH. IT
CRUSHED HIS
SKULL IN ONE
SWING."

"HANG-
ING FROM
A ROPE, THE
WEIGHT ARCED
THROUGH THE
AIR ABOVE THE
DARK GAS
STATION."



"THE STATION'S ROOF IS ABOUT FIVE METERS* OFF THE GROUND.

EVEN IF WE ASSUME THE DETECTIVE TO BE 190 CM** TALL, THE LENGTH OF THE PENDULUM WOULD HAVE TO BE THREE METERS*** OR MORE."

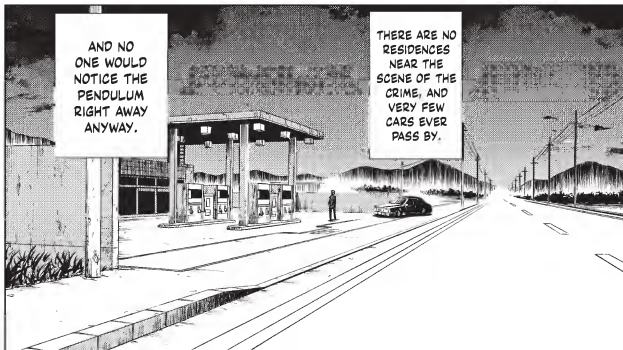
* ABOUT 16' **ABOUT 6'3" *** ABOUT 10'



"THE WEIGHT WOULD ONLY HAVE TO BE A CINDER BLOCK OF ABOUT 5 KG*..."

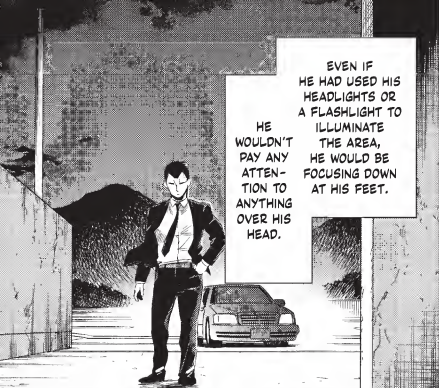
...TO GAIN MORE THAN ENOUGH MOMENTUM TO SMASH A HUMAN SKULL."

*ABOUT 11 LBS.



AND NO ONE WOULD NOTICE THE PENDULUM RIGHT AWAY ANYWAY.

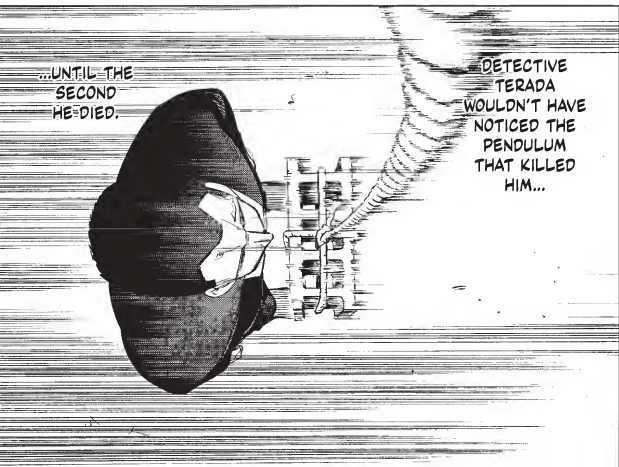
THERE ARE NO RESIDENCES NEAR THE SCENE OF THE CRIME, AND VERY FEW CARS EVER PASS BY.



HE
WOULDN'T
PAY ANY
ATTENTION TO
ANYTHING
OVER HIS
HEAD.

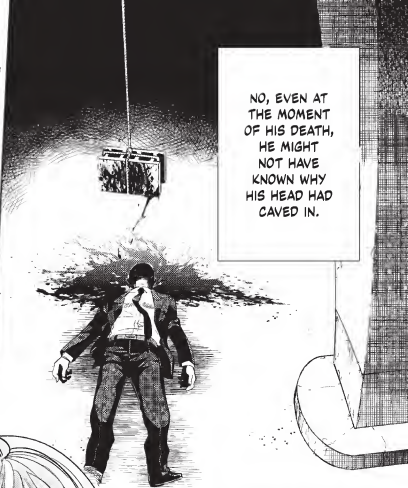
EVEN IF
HE HAD USED HIS
HEADLIGHTS OR
A FLASHLIGHT TO
ILLUMINATE
THE AREA,
HE WOULD BE
FOCUSING DOWN
AT HIS FEET.

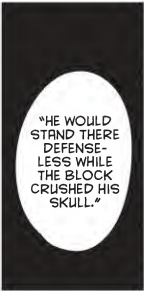
THE GAS
STATION WAS
ABANDONED,
AND THE
ROOF WAS
SHROUDED IN
DARKNESS.



...UNTIL THE
SECOND
HE DIED.

DETECTIVE
TERADA
WOULDN'T HAVE
NOTICED THE
PENDULUM
THAT KILLED
HIM...





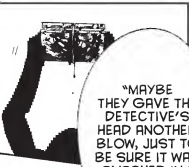
"HE WOULD
STAND THERE
DEFENSE-
LESS WHILE
THE BLOCK
CRUSHED HIS
SKULL."



HE
COULDN'T
HAVE
IMAGINED
THIS
MODE OF
MURDER."

"EVEN IF
DETECTIVE
TERADA WAS
WARY OF HIS
INFORMANT,

"NOT EVEN
THE BEST OF
DETECTIVES COULD
HAVE PREDICTED
THAT A PENDULUM
WOULD SWING
AT HIM OUT OF
NOWHERE."



"MAYBE
THEY GAVE THE
DETECTIVE'S
HEAD ANOTHER
BLOW, JUST TO
BE SURE IT WAS
SMASHED IN."



SMASH



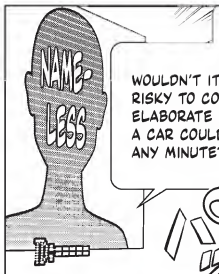
"AFTER
MURDERING
DETECTIVE
TERADA, THE
PERPETRATOR
WOULD HAVE
COLLECTED
THE
TRAP,
ERASED
ANY
EVIDENCE
THAT THEY'D
BEEN
THERE, AND
LEFT THE
SCENE."



...AND
DISPOSE
OF THE
PENDU-
LUM.



AFTER THAT,
ALL THEY
HAD TO DO
WAS DESTROY
THE STEEL
LADY NANASE
COSTUME AND
PROPS...



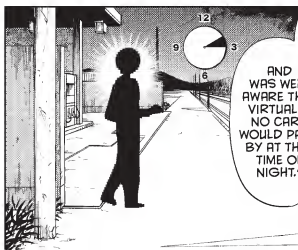
THE SCENE OF THE CRIME WAS
RIGHT NEXT TO THE HIGHWAY.

WOULDN'T IT BE TOO
RISKY TO COMMIT SUCH AN
ELABORATE MURDER WHEN
A CAR COULD DRIVE BY
ANY MINUTE?



ABAN-
DONED
GAS
STATION

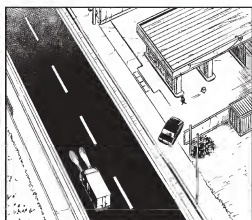
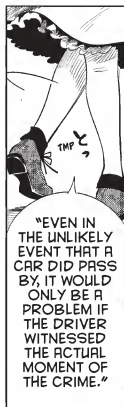
NATIONAL
HIGHWAY



AND
WAS WELL
AWARE THAT
VIRTUALLY
NO CARS
WOULD PASS
BY AT THAT
TIME OF
NIGHT."

"THE KILLER
LOOKED
UP THE
HIGHWAY'S
TRAFFIC
VOLUME
BEFORE-
HAND,



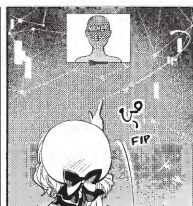
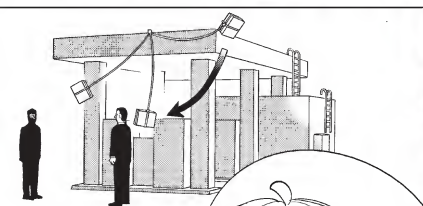




Criminal Investigation Division

THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE
LINE OF SIGHT OF THE
TO PROTECT THE
Even in the unlikely event
would only be a problem if the
actual moment of the crime.
But if the killer stood where
the highway, making sure that
by only saw Detective





"THEY SET UP THE TRAP SO THE PENDULUM WOULD HIT FROM BEHIND DIRECTLY OR AT AN ANGLE—SOME DIRECTION THE VICTIM WOULDN'T EASILY NOTICE."

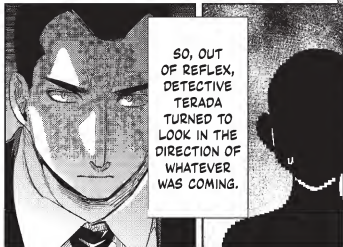
"THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE KILLER THOUGHT."



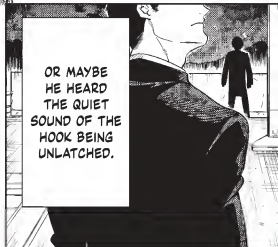
PERHAPS
HIS
DETECTIVE'S
INTUITION
ALERTED
HIM TO THE
APPROACH OF
THE LETHAL
OBJECT."

"HE MAY
HAVE BEEN
DEFENSE-
LESS, BUT
HE'S STILL
A GOOD
DETECTIVE.

"BUT
DETECTIVE
TERADA
DID SENSE
SOMETHING
COMING AT
HIM FROM
BEHIND."



SO, OUT
OF REFLEX,
DETECTIVE
TERADA
TURNED TO
LOOK IN THE
DIRECTION OF
WHATEVER
WAS COMING.

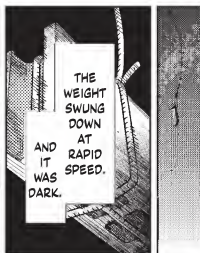


OR MAYBE
HE HEARD
THE QUIET
SOUND OF THE
HOOK BEING
UNLATCHED.



IF HE DID
CATCH
SIGHT OF
ANYTHING,

IT WOULD
HAVE BEEN
TOO LATE
TO DODGE
OR DEFEND.



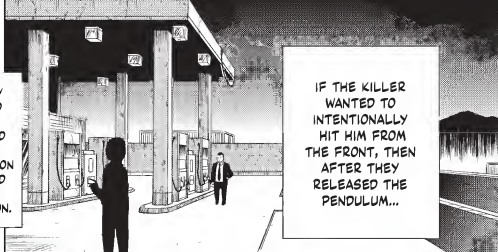
THE
WEIGHT
SWUNG
DOWN
AT
RAPID
SPEED.
AND
IT
WAS
DARK.

AND THAT'S
WHY HE WAS
KILLED BY A
DIRECT BLOW
TO THE FACE.





...THEY
COULD
HAVE
CALLED
HIS
ATTENTION
TOWARD
THEIR
LOCATION.

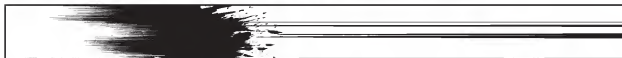
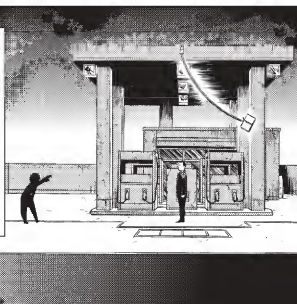


IF THE KILLER
WANTED TO
INTENTIONALLY
HIT HIM FROM
THE FRONT, THEN
AFTER THEY
RELEASED THE
PENDULUM...



THEY
COULD
HAVE
TRICKED
HIM INTO
TURNING
AROUND.

THEN, IF
THEY MADE
A SUDDEN
MOVEMENT
THAT
POINTED TO
SOMETHING
BEHIND THE
DETECTIVE,



NAME-
LESS

1st
POP

BUT ISN'T THAT RISKY,
TOO?



"THAT'S
THE
DOWN-
SIDE."

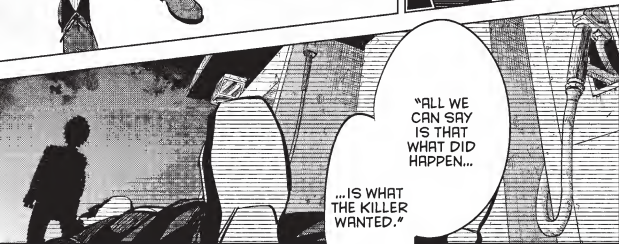
BUT THE
UPSIDE
IS THAT
THE VICTIM
WOULD BE
HIT IN THE
FACE."

"AT THIS
JUNCTURE,
WE DON'T
HAVE ENOUGH
INFORMATION
TO KNOW HOW
THE KILLER
CHOSE TO
DO IT."



"YES."

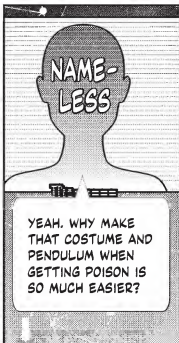
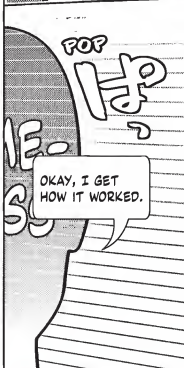
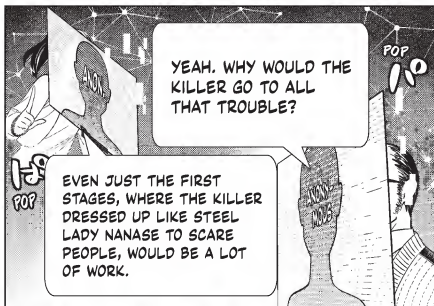
IF THEY
DID THAT,
DETECTIVE
TERADA MIGHT
HAVE MOVED
HIS HEAD
OUT OF THE
PENDULUM'S
PATH."



"ALL WE
CAN SAY
IS THAT
WHAT DID
HAPPEN..."

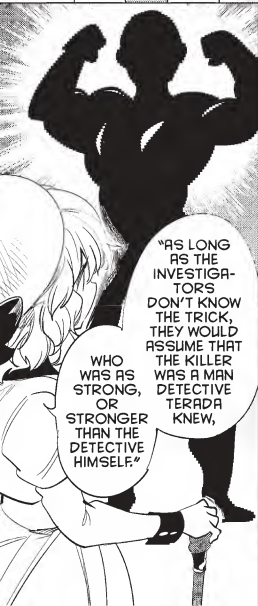
"...IS WHAT
THE KILLER
WANTED."





THEY
WANTED
TO DIVERT
SUSPICION
AS FAR FROM
THEMSELVES
AS POSSIBLE."

"THE REASON
THE KILLER
WENT TO ALL
THAT TROUBLE
WAS THAT, IN
THE EVENT OF
DETECTIVE
TERADA'S
MURDER,



"AS LONG
AS THE
INVESTIGA-
TORS
DON'T KNOW
THE TRICK,
THEY WOULD
ASSUME THAT
THE KILLER
WAS A MAN
DETECTIVE
TERADA
KNEW,

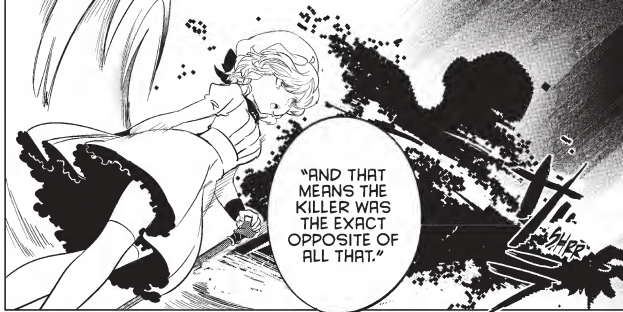
WHO
WAS AS
STRONG,
OR
STRONGER
THAN THE
DETECTIVE
HIMSELF."



"IF A
BIG, BURLY
DETECTIVE IS
BLUDGEONED
IN THE FACE,
OUTSIDE, IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE
NIGHT, OUR
CRIMINAL'S
PROFILE LEANS
HEAVILY
IN A CERTAIN
DIRECTION.

IT WOULD
HAVE TO HAVE
BEEN SOMEONE
STRONG ENOUGH
TO KILL DETECTIVE
TERADA BEFORE
HE COULD FIGHT
BACK, AND WHO
WOULD REASON-
ABLY BE WITH HIM
AT THE SCENE OF
THE CRIME IN THE
MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT.

THE INVES-
TIGATION
WOULD
CERTAINLY
BEGIN WITH
THOSE
FACTS IN
MIND."

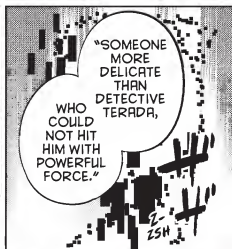


"AND THAT
MEANS THE
KILLER WAS
THE EXACT
OPPOSITE OF
ALL THAT."



"...IF THE
DETECTIVE
HAD BEEN
MURDERED BY
SOMETHING
AS SIMPLE AS
POISON."

"SOMEONE
WHO WOULD
LIKELY BE
THE PRIME
SUSPECT..."



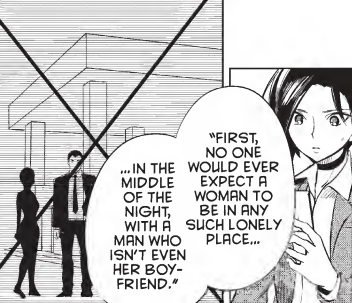
"SOMEONE
MORE
DELICATE
THAN
DETECTIVE
TERADA,
WHO
COULD
NOT HIT
HIM WITH
POWERFUL
FORCE."



"SOMEONE
UNLIKELY TO BE
FOUND ALONE
WITH HIM, IN AN
ABANDONED
PLACE, IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE
NIGHT."

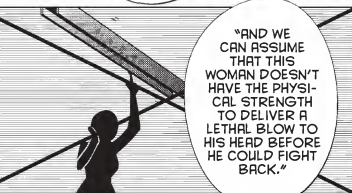
NAME-
LESS

NAME-
LESS

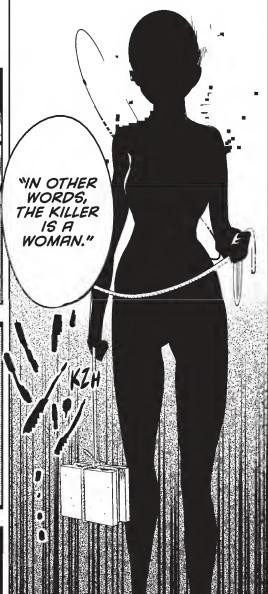


...IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WITH A MAN WHO ISN'T EVEN HER BOY-FRIEND."

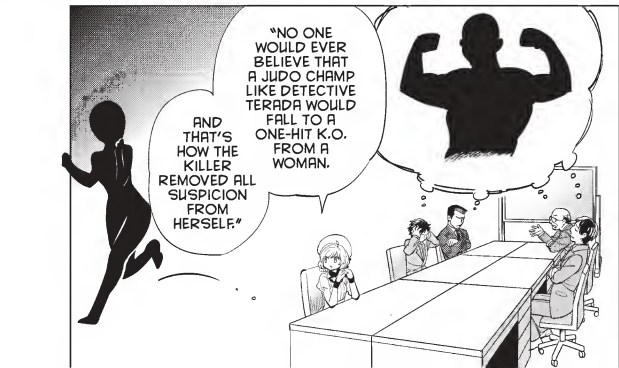
"FIRST, NO ONE WOULD EVER EXPECT A WOMAN TO BE IN ANY SUCH LONELY PLACE..."



"AND WE CAN ASSUME THAT THIS WOMAN DOESN'T HAVE THE PHYSICAL STRENGTH TO DELIVER A LETHAL BLOW TO HIS HEAD BEFORE HE COULD FIGHT BACK."



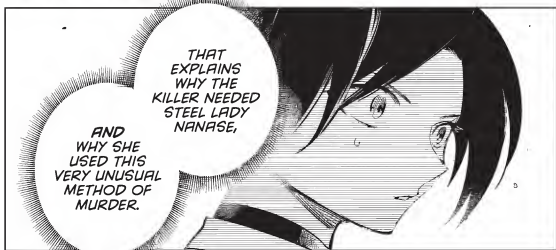
"IN OTHER WORDS, THE KILLER IS A WOMAN."

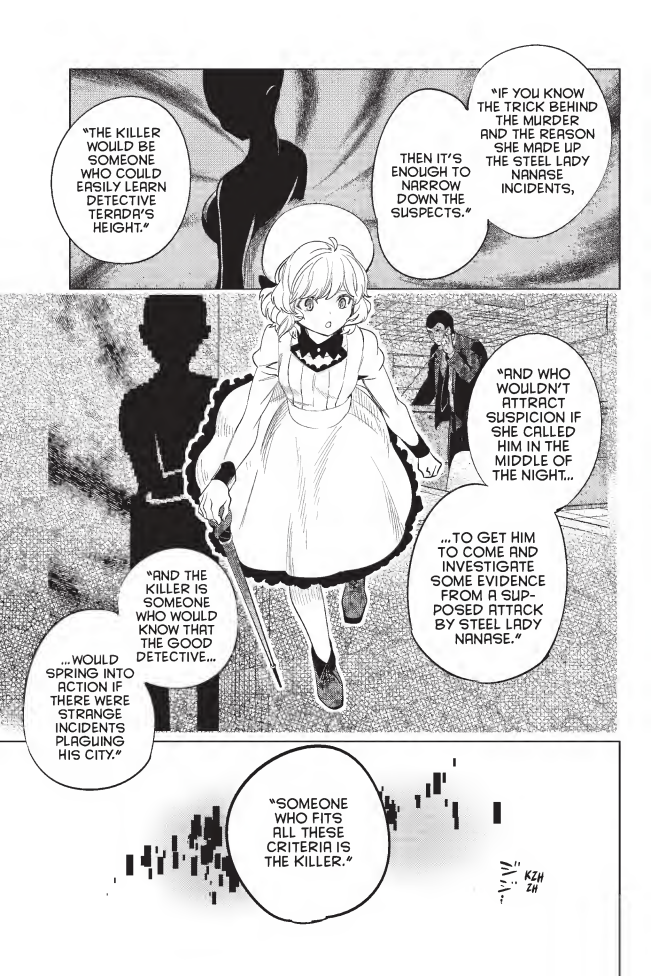


AND THAT'S HOW THE KILLER REMOVED ALL SUSPICION FROM HERSELF."

"NO ONE WOULD EVER BELIEVE THAT A JUDO CHAMP LIKE DETECTIVE TERADA WOULD FALL TO A ONE-HIT K.O. FROM A WOMAN."







"THE KILLER
WOULD BE
SOMEONE
WHO COULD
EASILY LEARN
DETECTIVE
TERADA'S
HEIGHT."

THEN IT'S
ENOUGH TO
NARROW
DOWN THE
SUSPECTS."

"IF YOU KNOW
THE TRICK BEHIND
THE MURDER
AND THE REASON
SHE MADE UP
THE STEEL LADY
NANASE
INCIDENTS,

"AND THE
KILLER IS
SOMEONE
WHO WOULD
KNOW THAT
THE GOOD
DETECTIVE..."

...WOULD
SPRING INTO
ACTION IF
THERE WERE
STRANGE
INCIDENTS
PLAGUING
HIS CITY."

"AND WHO
WOULDN'T
ATTRACT
SUSPICION IF
SHE CALLED
HIM IN THE
MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT..."

...TO GET HIM
TO COME AND
INVESTIGATE
SOME EVIDENCE
FROM A SUP-
POSED ATTACK
BY STEEL LADY
NANASE."

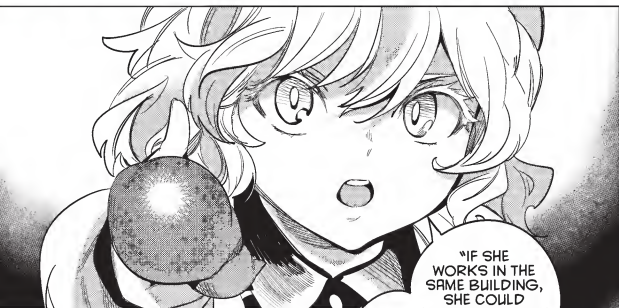
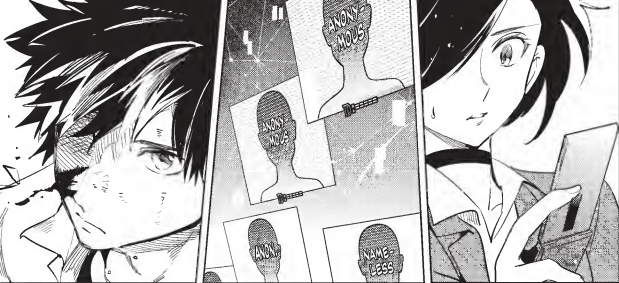
"SOMEONE
WHO FITS
ALL THESE
CRITERIA IS
THE KILLER."

KZH
ZH



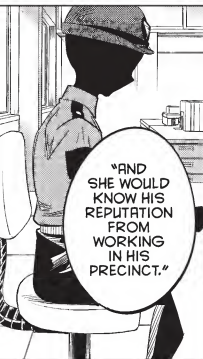
"THE
KILLER..."

"...IS A
POLICE-
WOMAN
WHO WORKS
AT DETECTIVE
TERADA'S
PRECINCT."



"IF SHE
WORKS IN THE
SAME BUILDING,
SHE COULD
EASILY DETERMINE
THE VICTIM'S
HEIGHT..."

...BY
MEASURING
IT AGAINST
DOORS,
PRECINCT
VENDING
MACHINES,
HEIGHTS OF
POSTERS AND
SIGNS,
ETC."



"AND
SHE WOULD
KNOW HIS
REPUTATION
FROM
WORKING
IN HIS
PRECINCT."

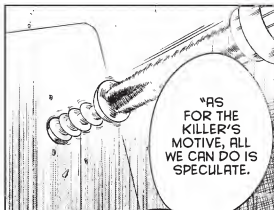




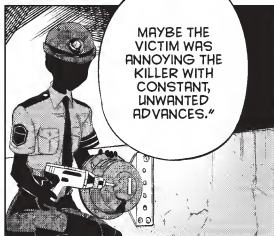
"IF A POLICE WOMAN WERE ATTACKED BY A SUSPICIOUS PERSON, SHE COULD TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO PRESERVE EVIDENCE, AND CALL A RELIABLE DETECTIVE TO THE SCENE,"



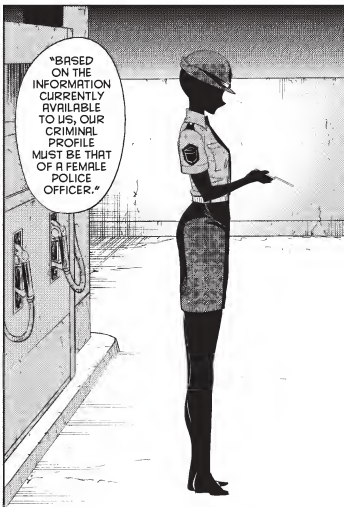
"AND THE VICTIM WOULD NEVER SUSPECT A THING."



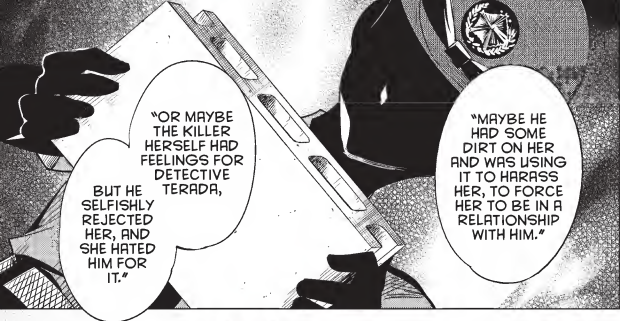
"AS FOR THE KILLER'S MOTIVE, ALL WE CAN DO IS SPECULATE."



"MAYBE THE VICTIM WAS ANNOYING THE KILLER WITH CONSTANT, UNWANTED ADVANCES."



"BASED ON THE INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO US, OUR CRIMINAL PROFILE MUST BE THAT OF A FEMALE POLICE OFFICER."



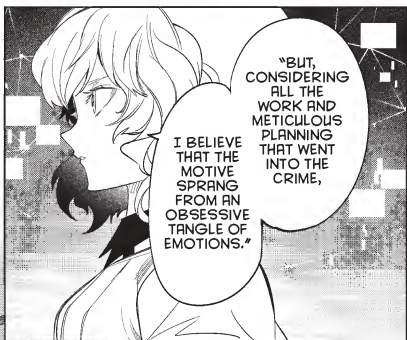
"OR MAYBE
THE KILLER
HERSELF HAD
FEELINGS FOR
DETECTIVE
TERADA,

BUT HE
SELFISHLY
REJECTED
HER, AND
SHE HATED
HIM FOR
IT."

"MAYBE HE
HAD SOME
DIRT ON HER
AND WAS USING
IT TO HARASS
HER, TO FORCE
HER TO BE IN A
RELATIONSHIP
WITH HIM."

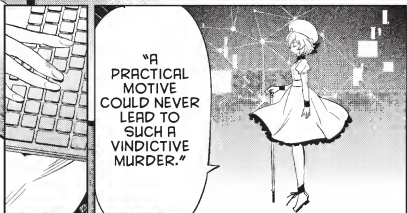


I THINK
THAT COVERS
IT FOR MY
FIRST CLAIM.



I BELIEVE
THAT THE
MOTIVE
SPRANG
FROM AN
OBSESSIVE
TANGLE OF
EMOTIONS."

"BUT,
CONSIDERING
ALL THE
WORK AND
METICULOUS
PLANNING
THAT WENT
INTO THE
CRIME,



"A
PRACTICAL
MOTIVE
COULD NEVER
LEAD TO
SUCH A
VINDICTIVE
MURDER."



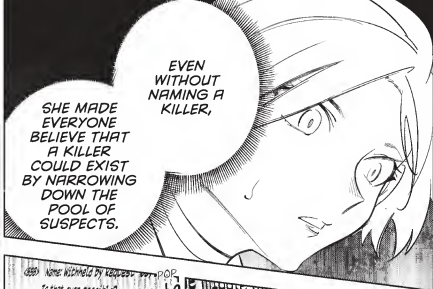
"SHE IS A
FICTITIOUS
CREATION
THAT A
POLICE-
WOMAN
DUPED THE
WORLD..."

...INTO
BELIEVING,
ALL SO SHE
COULD SET A
TRAP TO KILL
DETECTIVE
TERADA."

"STEEL
LADY
NANASE
IS NOT A
GHOST."



"SHE
IS THE
MEANS
TO A
MURDER!"



EVEN
WITHOUT
NAMING A
KILLER,

SHE MADE
EVERYONE
BELIEVE THAT
A KILLER
COULD EXIST
BY NARROWING
DOWN THE
POOL OF
SUSPECTS.

(959) Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:51
Is that ever possible?

(960) Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:51
I can see it being a woman.

(961) Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:51
I think this period theory is right.
Still, it's a really elaborate murder.

(962) Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:51
It explains Steel Lady Narase's appearance.
Victim's face was smashed in.

(963) Name: Withheld by Request 09/04 22:51
According to this logic,
wouldn't anybody close to him be able to figure it out?

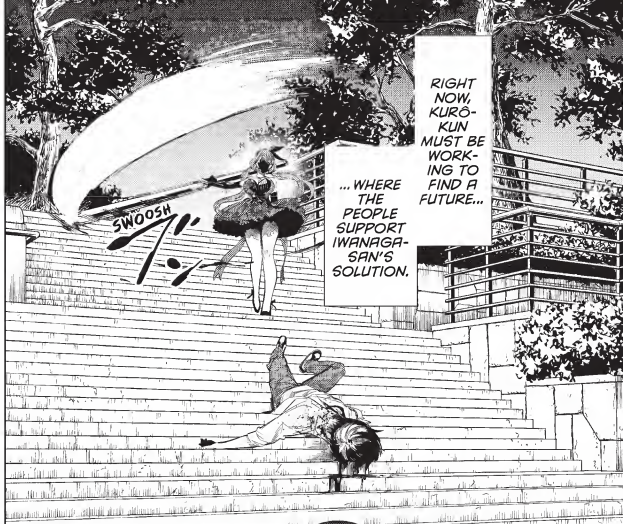
Some items she has
y Steel Lady

Name: kuebik
Steel

... THAT
SHE MIGHT
AS WELL HAVE
IDENTIFIED
THE VERY
PERSON.
She
the w
relation that a
believing, all so sh
Will Detective Terada. She is the r

AND
JUST LIKE
THAT, SHE
REDIRECTED
THE
CURRENT OF
THOUGHT.





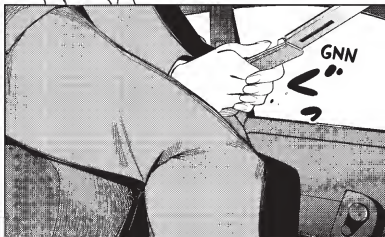
RIGHT
NOW,
KURŌ-
KUN
MUST BE
WORK-
ING TO
FIND A
FUTURE...

... WHERE
THE
PEOPLE
SUPPORT
IWANAGA-
SAN'S
SOLUTION.



IT'S UP
TO YOU,
IWANAGA.

KURŌ-
SENPAI,
IF YOU
WOULD.





YOUR
PROFILE
OF THE
KILLER...

...IS
PRACTICALLY
DESCRIBING
ME!



...HEY,
WAIT A
MINUTE!



HOW COULD
YOU EXPECT
ME NOT TO?!

OH.

YOU
NOTICED
THAT?



YOU
WOULDN'T
WANT ME TO
GO CASTING
SUSPICION ON
A COMPLETE
STRANGER
OF A POLICE-
WOMAN.

YOU'RE
JUST
GOING TO
HAVE TO
PUT UP
WITH IT.

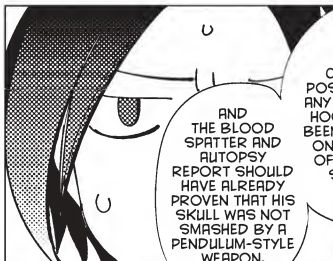
A POLICE-
WOMAN WHO
WORKS AT THE
MAKURAZAKA
POLICE
DEPARTMENT,
WHO WAS
ADMIRING BY
TERADA-
SAN.

EVEN
THE
CHIEF
WOULD
ONLY NEED
ONE
GUESS!



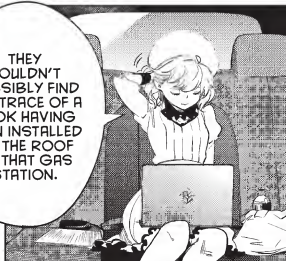
AND EVEN IF THEY DID LOOK INTO IT, IT WOULDN'T TAKE THEM LONG TO DISCOVER THAT THE WHOLE THING IS A LIE.

FIRST OF ALL, THE INVESTIGATION TEAM ISN'T GOING TO TAKE SOME RANDOM INTERNET FORUMS SERIOUSLY.



AND THE BLOOD SPATTER AND AUTOPSY REPORT SHOULD HAVE ALREADY PROVEN THAT HIS SKULL WAS NOT SMASHED BY A PENDULUM-STYLE WEAPON.

THEY COULDN'T POSSIBLY FIND ANY TRACE OF A HOOK HAVING BEEN INSTALLED ON THE ROOF OF THAT GAS STATION.



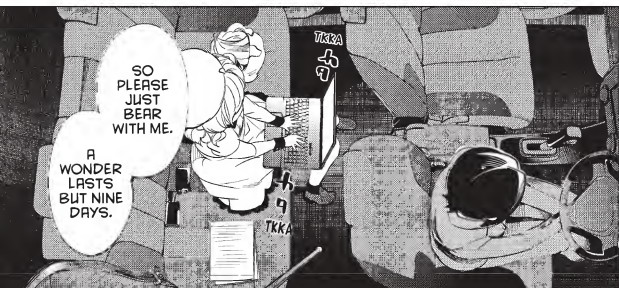
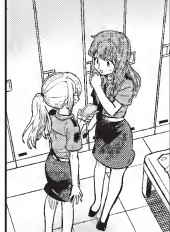
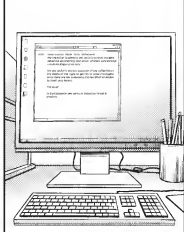
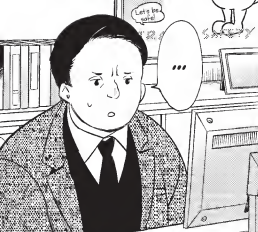
SIGN: NATIONAL TRAFFIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN

THERE *ARE* GOING TO BE PEOPLE AT THE PRECINCT WHO ARE GOING TO WONDER.



BUT NO ONE CARES ABOUT THAT ON THE INTERNET.

THE PEOPLE THERE BELIEVE WHAT THEY WANT.



I FIND IT UNLIKELY THAT A FEMALE KILLER COULD SET THAT PENDULUM UP ON THE GAS STATION ROOF ALL BY HERSELF.

ANON.

ANONY-
MOUS

NAME-
LESS

Z-
ZSH

I'M NOT
BUYING IT.

WOULD IT REALLY BE
SAFE TO MAKE UP AN
URBAN LEGEND,

AND THEN WREAK
ENOUGH HAVOC TO GET
DETECTIVE TERADA'S
ATTENTION?

NAME-
LESS

ANON.

ANON.

ANON.

YEAH, THE PENDULUM
THING DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE.

KZH-
ZH

Z-
ZSH

THIS IS JUST SOME NON-BELIEVING,
HARDHEADED FOOL, FORCING A
RATIONAL EXPLANATION SO THEY
DON'T HAVE TO ADMIT THAT STEEL
LADY NANASE IS REAL.

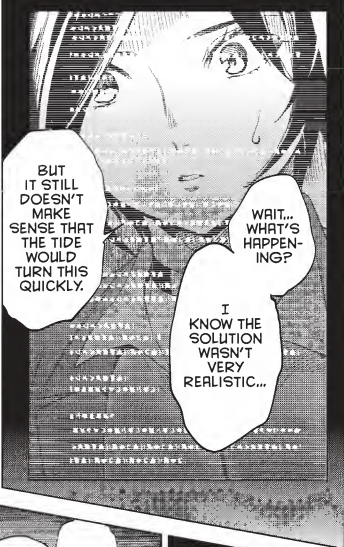
IT WAS A PRETTY
FUN THEORY,
THOUGH.





I
THOUGHT

...KURŌ-KUN
USED HIS
POWERS TO
CHANGE THE
CURRENT OF
THOUGHT.



BUT
IT STILL
DOESN'T
MAKE
SENSE THAT
THE TIDE
WOULD
TURN THIS
QUICKLY.

WAIT...
WHAT'S
HAPPEN-
ING?

I
KNOW THE
SOLUTION
WASN'T
VERY
REALISTIC...



AND SHE
HAS POWERS
JUST LIKE
KURŌ-KUN'S?
SHE CAN
CHOOSE THE
FUTURE?

YES,
JUST AS I
EXPLAINED
EARLIER.

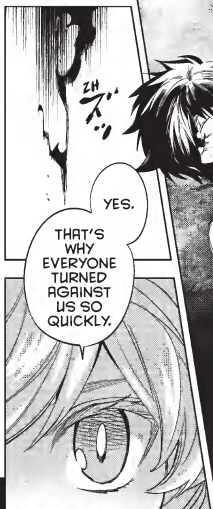
YOU SAID
IT'S RIKKA-
SAN TRYING
TO GIVE FORM
TO STEEL LADY
NANASE?

IWA-
NAGA-
SAN.

YES.

NOD
ON
TAKA
TAKA
TAKA





YES.

THAT'S
WHY
EVERYONE
TURNED
AGAINST
US SO
QUICKLY.

BUT
DOESN'T
THAT
MEAN...

...RIKKA-
SAN CAN
FORCE
WHATEVER
FUTURE SHE
WANTS,
TOO?!



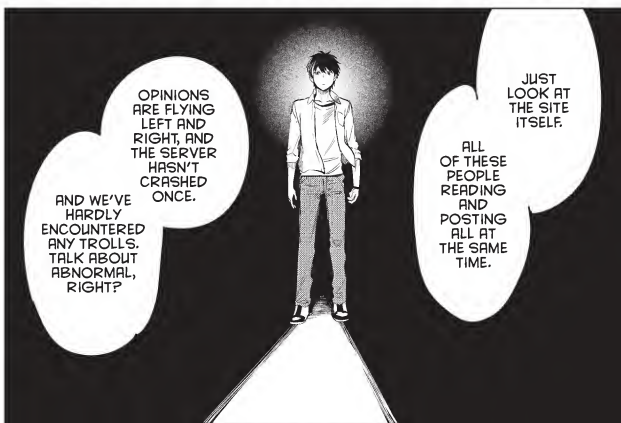
THE GHOST
THEORY
ALREADY HAD
A LOT OF
SUPPORT.

ALL SHE
HAD TO DO
WAS POINT
OUT A FEW
FLAWS
IN OUR
SOLUTION,
DIE,

AND
SHE COULD
EASILY
SHIFTED THE
CURRENT
AWAY FROM
US.



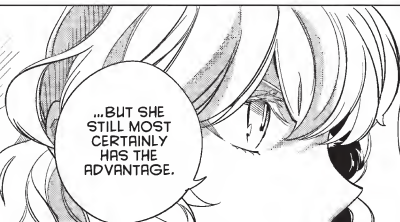






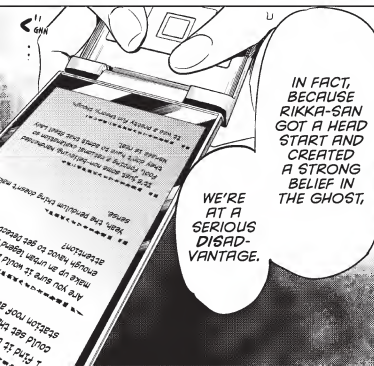
...WITH
AS FEW
PROBLEMS
AS
POSSIBLE.

I SUSPECT
RIKKA-SAN IS
MAINTAINING
THE WEBSITE
BY SELECTING
A FUTURE...



...BUT SHE
STILL MOST
CERTAINLY
HAS THE
ADVANTAGE.

SHE MAY
NOT BE ABLE
TO CENSOR
COMMENTS...



WE'RE
AT A
SERIOUS
DISAD-
VANTAGE.

IN FACT,
BECAUSE
RIKKA-SAN
GOT A HEAD
START AND
CREATED
A STRONG
BELIEF IN
THE GHOST,



RIKKA-SAN
IS ABOVE
THE LAWS OF
NATURE, TOO...
THAT REMOVES
WHATEVER
ADVANTAGE
WE HAD.



ONLY
FICTION.

HERE,
THE
TRUTH
NEVER
EXISTED.

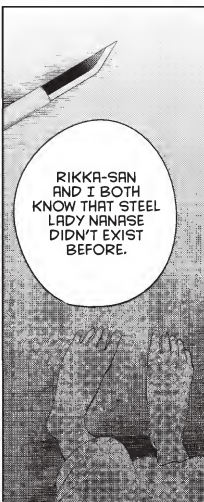
THIS IS
A UNIQUE
ASSEMBLY.

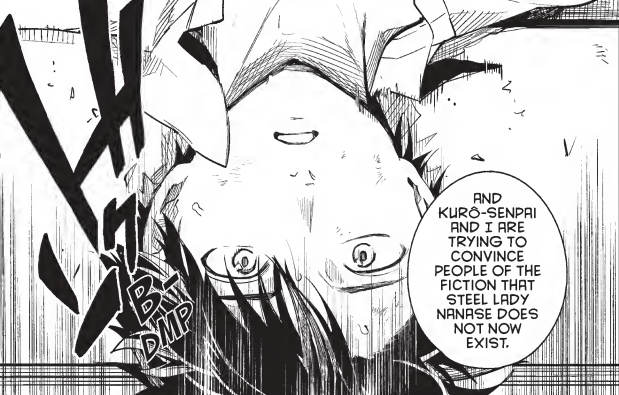


BUT SHE
IS TRYING
TO GIVE
FORM
TO THAT
FICTION.



RIKKA-SAN
AND I BOTH
KNOW THAT STEEL
LADY NANASE
DIDN'T EXIST
BEFORE.





AND
KURŌ-SENPAI
AND I ARE
TRYING TO
CONVINCE
PEOPLE OF THE
FICTION THAT
STEEL LADY
NANASE DOES
NOT NOW
EXIST.



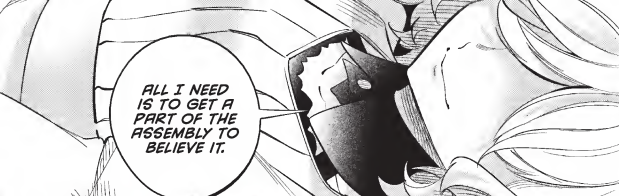


YOU MIGHT
SAY THIS IS A
COMMITTEE
OF DUELING
FICTIONS.

PA-
POW

ガッ

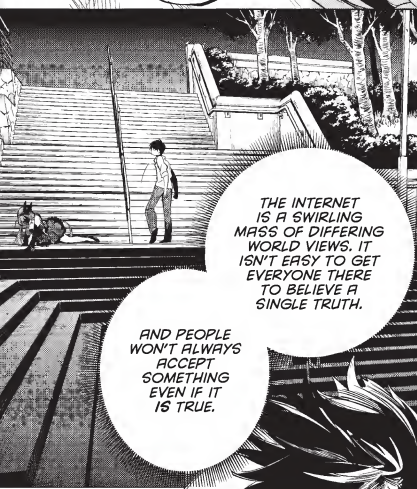




ALL I NEED
IS TO GET A
PART OF THE
ASSEMBLY TO
BELIEVE IT.



JUST
A PART
OF IT...



THE INTERNET
IS A SWIRLING
MASS OF DIFFERING
WORLD VIEWS. IT
ISN'T EASY TO GET
EVERYONE THERE
TO BELIEVE A
SINGLE TRUTH.

AND PEOPLE
WON'T ALWAYS
ACCEPT
SOMETHING
EVEN IF IT
IS TRUE.



I SEE.

△ RISE
↑



IN THAT
CASE...

...WE JUST HAVE
TO PRESENT
A VARIETY OF
TRUTHS TO MATCH
THAT VARIETY OF
WORLD VIEWS.



ゴ
ゴ
ゴ
RUMBLE
SO SHE'S
GOING TO
DO THIS
THREE MORE
TIMES...

FWOOM

THE
PENDULUM
SOLUTION
WASN'T
ENOUGH TO
COMPLETELY
WIPE OUT
THE PEOPLE'S
DESIRE TO
BELIEVE IN
STEEL LADY
NANASE.

BUT IT
SHOULD
HAVE WON
SOME OF
THEM OVER
TO OUR
SIDE.

CRACK



KHEEEN

...AND
SLOWLY,
BUT SURELY,
CHIP AWAY
AT STEEL
LADY
NANASE'S
SUPPORT!

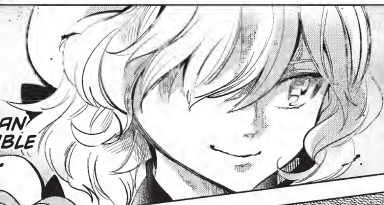
THAT'S
WHAT
GIVES THIS
STRATEGY
A CHANCE.

SHE JUST
NEEDS TO
CONVINCE
ENOUGH
PEOPLE NOT
TO VOTE FOR
RIKKA-SAN'S
PROPOSED
BILL.



SHE
DOESN'T
NEED ONE
THEORY TO
GAIN THE
MAJORITY.

WHAT AN
INCREDIBLE
GIRL.



SHE'S ABLE
TO EXHAUST
EVERY POSSIBLE
IDEA, EXPERTLY
WIELDING HER
BLADE IN ONE
HAND...

...WHILE
INJECTING
POISON
WITH THE
OTHER.

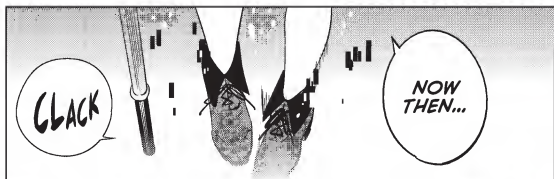




SHE WIELDS
LIES AS A
WEAPON TO
SOLVE HER
PROBLEMS...

...BUT I
HAD NO
IDEA SHE
COULD
BE THIS
DIABOLICAL.



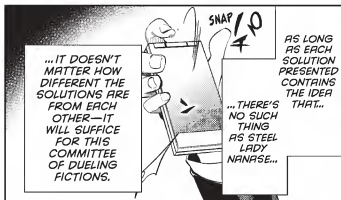
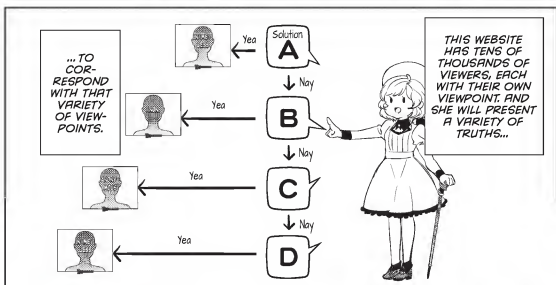


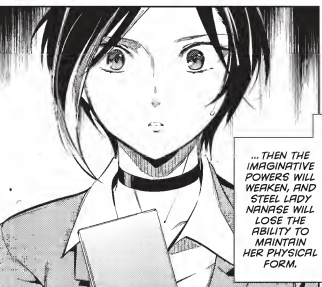






SHE SAID
SHE'S COME
UP WITH
FOUR
SOLUTIONS.



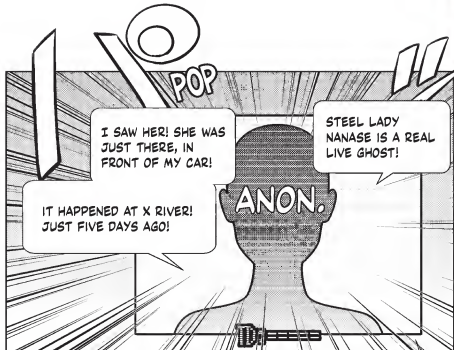


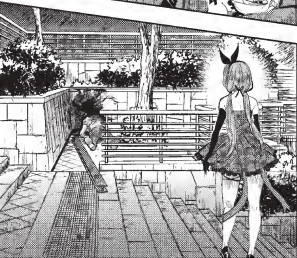
... THEN THE
IMAGINATIVE
POWERS WILL
WEAKEN, AND
STEEL LADY
NANASE WILL
LOSE THE
ABILITY TO
MAINTAIN
HER PHYSICAL
FORM.

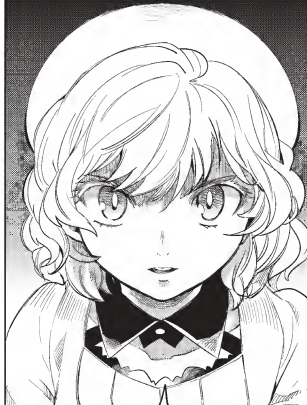


IF SHE KEEPS
CHIPPING AND
CHIPPING
AWAY AT THE
SUPPORT FOR
STEEL LADY
NANASE...









I WILL
BE THE
VICTOR.

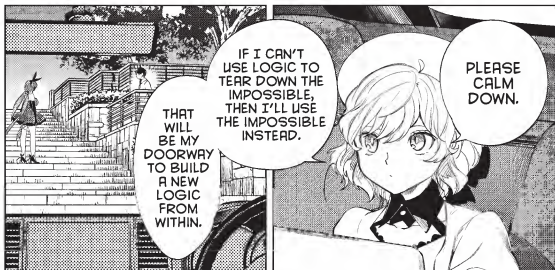
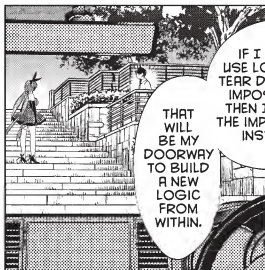


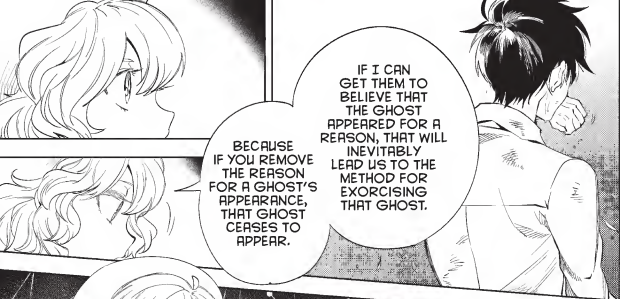
<031>

Name: kuebiko 09/04 22:50 ID: 11111111

Steel Lady Nanase isn't a hoax.

She's a real live ghost.





BECAUSE
IF YOU REMOVE
THE REASON
FOR A GHOST'S
APPEARANCE,
THAT GHOST
CEASES TO
APPEAR.

IF I CAN
GET THEM TO
BELIEVE THAT
THE GHOST
APPEARED FOR A
REASON, THAT WILL
INEVITABLY
LEAD US TO THE
METHOD FOR
EXORCISING
THAT GHOST.



"STEEL
LADY
NANASE
ISN'T A
HOAX.

SHE'S A
REAL LIVE
GHOST."

"SO WHY
WOULD KARIN
NANASE COME
BACK AS A
GHOST AND
START ATTACKING
PEOPLE?"



S—

STILL
...



HOW
IS THIS
GOING
TO...?





WHAT ARE YOU,
A TROLL?

WHAT'S THIS
NOW?

KZH

!!

!!

ZH

A NEW THEORY?

!!

ZH

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR
PENDULUM THING?

HUH?

OH, WE'RE STARTING
OVER?

!!

!!

!!

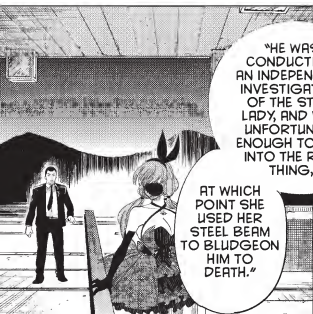
!!

!!



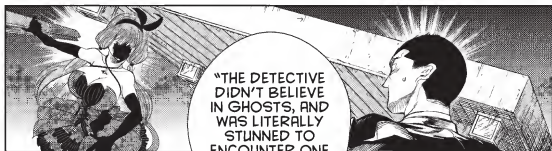
"DETECTIVE
TERADA WAS
KILLED BY THE
GHOST OF
STEEL LADY
NANASE."

ZSHHH



"HE WAS CONDUCTING AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF THE STEEL LADY, AND WAS UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO RUN INTO THE REAL THING,

AT WHICH POINT SHE USED HER STEEL BEAM TO BLUDGEON HIM TO DEATH."

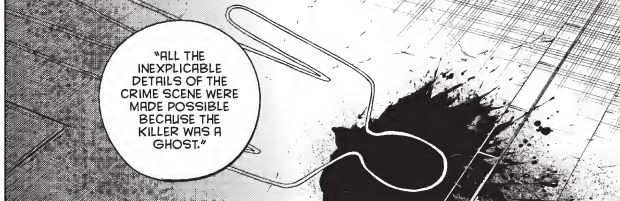


"THE DETECTIVE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN GHOSTS, AND WAS LITERALLY STUNNED TO ENCOUNTER ONE IN PERSON."



"THAT'S WHEN SHE CLUBBED HIM."

"HE COULDN'T HAVE FOUGHT BACK."



"ALL THE
INEXPLICABLE
DETAILS OF THE
CRIME SCENE WERE
MADE POSSIBLE
BECAUSE THE
KILLER WAS A
GHOST."



"...OR RATHER,
KARIN NANASE,
COME BACK AS
A GHOST?"



"SO WHY
WOULD
STEEL LADY
NANASE..."

WHIRL



"GHOSTS
ARE
SPIRITS OF
THE DECEASED
WHO HAVE
DEEP-SEATED
GRUDGES
AGAINST
OUR
WORLD..."

"...AND
WANDER
THIS PLANE
IN THEIR
ATTEMPT
TO RIGHT
THE INJUSTICE."

GLOW



"IF WE CAN
FIGURE THAT
OUT, WE SHOULD
BE ABLE TO HELP
THIS SENSATIONAL
SPECTRE PASS ON
TO HER ETERNAL
REST."

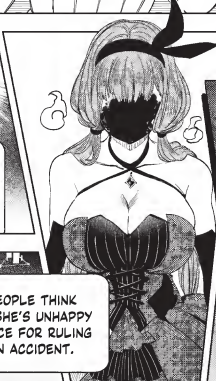
"SO WHAT
ATTACHMENT
DID KARIN
NANASE HAVE
TO THIS
WORLD?"



EVERYBODY JUST KIND OF ASSUMES
THE ACCIDENT MADE HER INTO A
VENGEFUL SPIRIT. ...I MEAN, WHAT
OTHER REASON COULD THERE BE?



WELL, SOME PEOPLE THINK
IT'S BECAUSE SHE'S UNHAPPY
WITH THE POLICE FOR RULING
THAT IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.



ANYONE WOULD GO
GHOST IF THEY'RE
KILLED IN AN UNTIMELY
ACCIDENT.

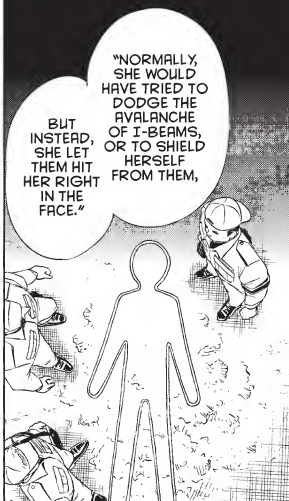


"KARIN
NANASE'S
DEATH IS
CONSIDERED
TO BE AN
ACCIDENTAL
DEATH VERGING
ON SUICIDE."



"ON THAT
RAINY NIGHT,
AT THAT
ABANDONED
CONSTRUCTION
SITE,

KARIN NANASE
WAS IN SUCH
A STATE OF
DESPAIR THAT
SHE WAS WILLING
TO TAKE THE FULL
BRUNT OF THE
GIRDERS."

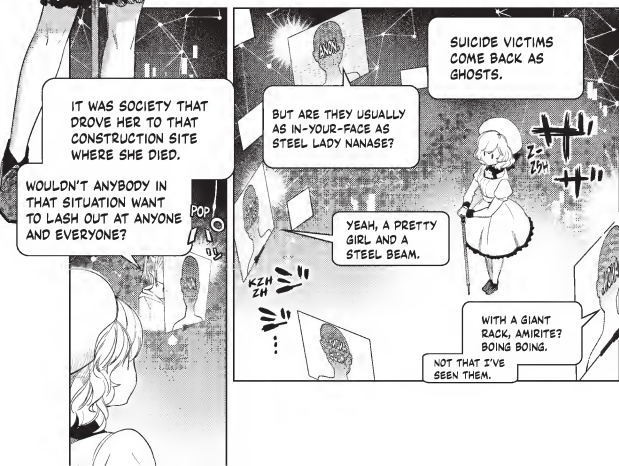


BUT
INSTEAD,
SHE LET
THEM HIT
HER RIGHT
IN THE
FACE."

"NORMALLY,
SHE WOULD
HAVE TRIED TO
DODGE THE
AVALANCHE
OF I-BEAMS,
OR TO SHIELD
HERSELF
FROM THEM,



"IN A
SENSE,
HER
DEATH
WAS A
WISH
COME
TRUE."





"STEEL LADY
NANASE MADE
HER A STAR."

THEN
DIDN'T
SOCIETY
REPAY
THE DEBT
LONG
AGO?"

"IF SHE
BLAMED THE
WORLD FOR
KILLING HER,
AND THAT
GRUDGE IS
WHAT MADE
HER A
GHOST,

WE'RE ALL
THRILLED
TO SEE
HER AS
STEEL LADY
NANASE."

"SHE
HASN'T BEEN
FORGOTTEN,
AND THE PUBLIC
DOESN'T
ATTACK HER
ANYMORE."

"SHE HAS
BECOME AN
IDOL ONCE
MORE."





The accident that killed her father

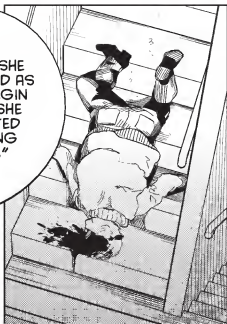
POP 10

Karin Nanase had been suspected of killing her own father.

Karin Nanase's father died in June of the year she was 19.

"THE WAY THINGS STAND, EVEN WITH HER NEW-FOUND POPULARITY, SHE MAY AGAIN FIND HERSELF THE OBJECT OF FEAR AND DERISION."

"THE REASON SHE WAS DETHRONED AS AN IDOL TO BEGIN WITH IS THAT SHE WAS SUSPECTED OF MURDERING HER FATHER."



PZH
7/11

AND SHE
IS NOT
TRYING
TO BE
REINSTATED
AS AN
IDOL."

"ERGO,
KARIN
NANASE DID
NOT BECOME
A GHOST
BECAUSE OF
HER FEELINGS
TOWARD THE
PUBLIC."

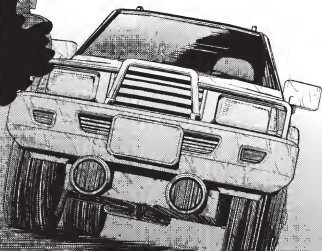
eyes

"SHE HAS
A DIFFERENT
GRIEVANCE—
A DIFFERENT
TRUTH."

"AND THAT
IS WHAT SHE
IS TRYING
TO TELL THE
WORLD."

"BUT
AFTER ALL
THIS TIME, THE
PUBLIC STILL
REFUSES TO
UNDERSTAND
THAT TRUTH."

THAT
IS WHY
SHE HAS
GROWN
MORE
VIOLENT."







AND SHE
CAME BACK
AS A GHOST
BECAUSE SHE
WANTS THE
WORLD TO
KNOW THAT."

"SHE IS
ANGRY
BECAUSE
SHE DID
NOT KILL
HIM,

"IF SOMEONE
DID COMMIT A
MURDER, THEN IT
WOULD ONLY BE
RIGHT FOR THEM
TO BE CENSURED
AND REMOVED
FROM IDOL
STATUS."

SHE
COULDN'T
RESENT THE
INJUSTICE
OF THAT."



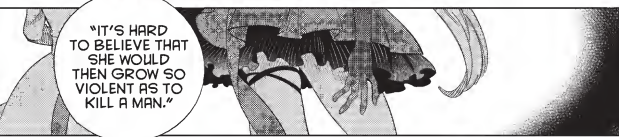
"BUT..."

...IS THAT
THE ONLY
REASON?"



"YOU
COULD
SAY SHE'S
HALFWAY
TO HER
GOAL."

"IF ALL THE
ACCUSATIONS
STOP, IT'S
BASICALLY THE
SAME AS BEING
DECLARED
INNOCENT."

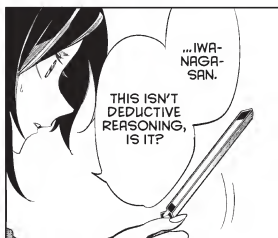


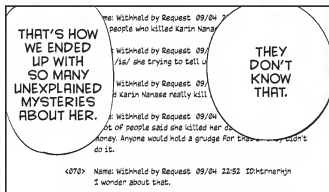
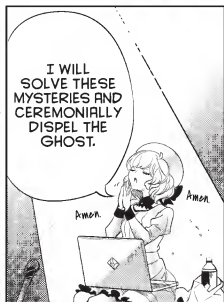
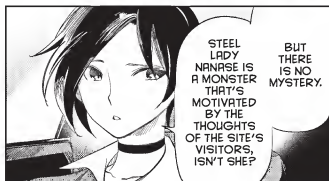
"IT'S HARD
TO BELIEVE THAT
SHE WOULD
THEN GROW SO
VIOLENT AS TO
KILL A MAN."



"HER
RAGE..."

"...DEMANDS
SOMETHING
ELSE."







The Tale of Karin Nanase

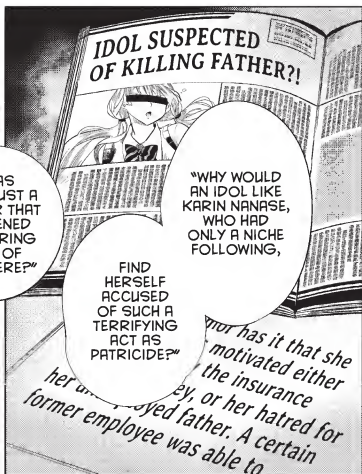


**...THE
PORTRAIT
OF THIS
IDOL'S
UNKNOWN
FACETS!**

My head
hurts.

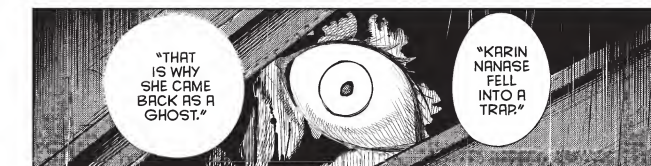


"WAS THIS JUST A RUMOR THAT HAPPENED TO SPRING OUT OF NOWHERE?"





"THIS
SUSPICION
WAS PLANNED,
THEN CREATED
ARTIFICIALLY
AND DELIBER-
ATELY."



"THAT
IS WHY
SHE CAME
BACK AS A
GHOST."

"KARIN
NANASE
FELL
INTO A
TRAP."



"KARIN
NANASE
WANTS THE
PERSON WHO
SET HER UP
AND DROVE
HER TO
SUICIDE..."

"...TO BE
BROUGHT
TO
JUSTICE."



"SHE NEEDS
US TO REALIZE
HER INTENTIONS,
AND BRING THE
TRUTH OF THE
ACCUSATIONS
TO LIGHT."



A FEW
REASONS
HAVE
BEEN PUT
FORTH."

"WHY WERE
THE PATRICIDE
CHARGES
AGAINST
KARIN NANASE
BLOWN SO
WILDLY OUT
OF PROPOR-
TION?"



"WHEN
WE DO,
STEEL LADY
NANASE
WILL FINALLY
REST IN
PEACE."





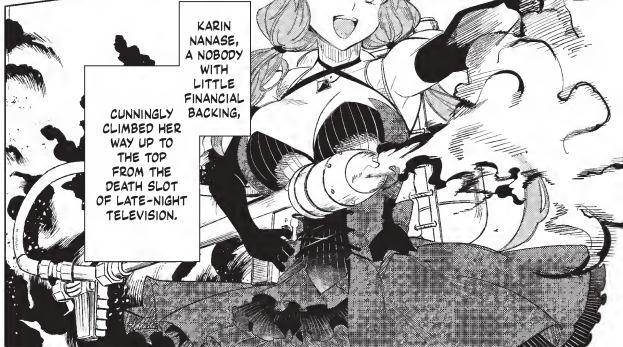
ANOTHER
IDOL WAS
JEALOUS OF
HER SUCCESS,
AND MADE THE
MATTER BIGGER
THAN IT WAS.
ET CETERA,
ET CETERA.

A POWERFUL
AGENCY
PLOTTED THE
WHOLE THING
TO TAKE A TV
OR MOVIE ROLE
FROM HER...

...AND GIVE
IT TO ONE OF
THEIR
OWN.

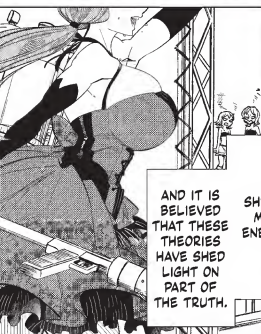


ALL
PLAUSIBLE
THEORIES.



KARIN
NANASE,
A NOBODY
WITH
LITTLE
FINANCIAL
BACKING,

CUNNINGLY
CLIMBED HER
WAY UP TO
THE TOP
FROM THE
DEATH SLOT
OF LATE-NIGHT
TELEVISION.



AND IT IS
BELIEVED
THAT THESE
THEORIES
HAVE SHED
LIGHT ON
PART OF
THE TRUTH.

SHE HAD
MANY
ENEMIES,



EVEN
ASSUMING
IT WAS
SLANDER OR
CONSPIRACY,
ISN'T THAT A
LITTLE FAR-
FETCHED?"

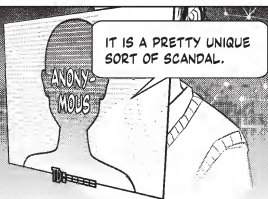
"...CHARGES
OF MURDER,
JUST TO
OVERTHROW
AN UP-AND-
COMING
IDOL?"



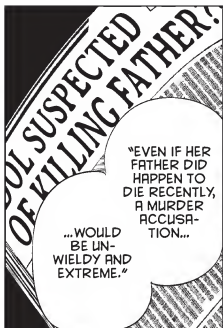
"HOW-
EVER..."



YEAH, SOME PEOPLE SAY
THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT
SO BELIEVABLE.



IT IS A PRETTY UNIQUE
SORT OF SCANDAL.



"EVEN IF HER FATHER DID HAPPEN TO DIE RECENTLY, A MURDER ACCUSATION..."

"...WOULD BE UNWIELDY AND EXTREME."



Karin Nanase Madly in Love?

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE DOWN AN IDOL, IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE CREDIBLE TO FABRICATE SOME STORY ABOUT LOVE OR MONEY TROUBLES."

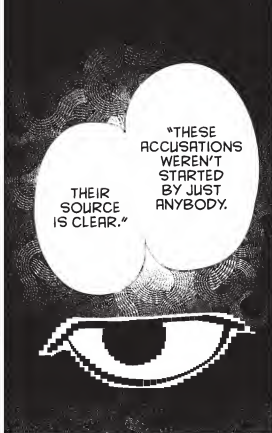
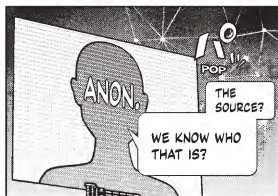


IDOL SUSPECTED OF KILLING FATHER?

"THE MEDIA AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES WERE ONLY RIDING THE WAVE OF AN ACCUSATION THAT WAS ALREADY THERE."



"WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO THE BEGINNING. WHO MADE THAT FIRST ACCUSATION?"

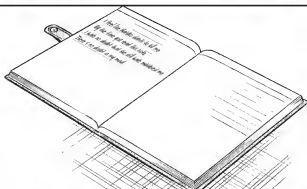




HE
COMPLAINED
TO HIS
FRIENDS
ABOUT HIS
DAUGHTER
KARIN,
NÉE HARUKO,
NANASE.

BEFORE HER
FATHER TOOK
HIS LETHAL
FALL DOWN
THOSE
STAIRS,

HE EVEN LEFT
A NOTE IN HIS
OWN HAND
THAT CLEARLY
STATES HIS
DAUGHTER'S
MURDEROUS
INTENT.



DID SHE HAVE A REASON
TO KILL HER FATHER?

I HEARD NANASE DID HAVE
A MOTIVE. SHE HATED HIM
OR SOMETHING.

THEY DIDN'T DO A LOT
OF ANALYSIS ON IT, BUT
WE'RE PRETTY SURE
IT'S REAL, RIGHT?

AND IT WAS LEAKED
BY A TABLOID? I
FIRST SAW IT ON THE
NET, I THINK...

AND THAT WASN'T UNTIL
FIVE MONTHS AFTER HE
DIED. THAT'S ANOTHER
MYSTERY.

YEAH, HE DID!

IT WAS THAT NOTE OF
HER FATHER'S THAT
STARTED IT ALL.

NAME-
LESS

THE ONE THAT SAYS HIS
DAUGHTER'S GONNA KILL HIM?
THAT WAS UP ON THE WIKI, TOO.



"...AND
THEY WERE
DISCOVERED
AFTER HIS
DEATH."

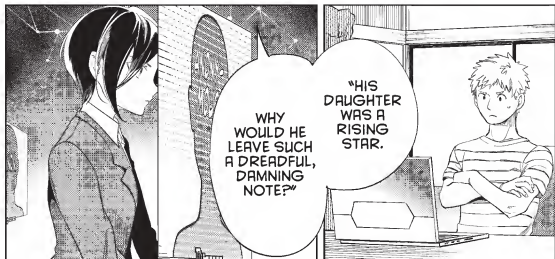
"HE WROTE
DOWN
HIS MIS-
GIVINGS..."



"THE
FATHER
SENSED
HOSTILITY
FROM HIS
DAUGHTER."



"BUT ISN'T
THAT AWFULLY
CONVENIENT?"



WHY
WOULD HE
LEAVE SUCH
A DREADFUL,
DAMNING
NOTE?"

"HIS
DAUGHTER
WAS A
RISING
STAR."



"IF KARIN NANASE PUSHED HER FATHER DOWN THE STAIRS,

AND WANTED IT TO LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT..."

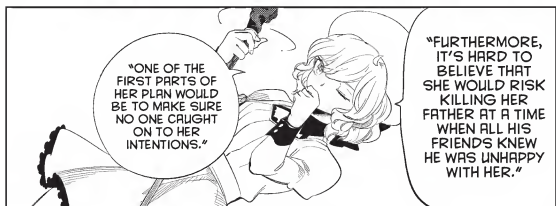


"...SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN WARY OF ANY NOTES OR SIMILAR WRITINGS. SHE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THEM ALL POSTHASTE."



SO SHE WOULD HAVE COVERED ALL HER BASES."

"RUMOR HAD IT THAT HE WAS CONSTANTLY COMPLAINING ABOUT HER TO JUST ABOUT EVERYONE,



"ONE OF THE FIRST PARTS OF HER PLAN WOULD BE TO MAKE SURE NO ONE CAUGHT ON TO HER INTENTIONS."

"FURTHERMORE, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SHE WOULD RISK KILLING HER FATHER AT A TIME WHEN ALL HIS FRIENDS KNEW HE WAS UNHAPPY WITH HER."

HMM, WHEN YOU PUT IT ALL TOGETHER LIKE THAT, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE.

ANON.

NAME-
LESS

POP / 10

KARIN NANASE WAS SMART.

SMART ENOUGH TO KEEP THE POLICE OFF HER TRAIL. THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE WAS SAYING.

BUT THAT'S A LOT OF MISTAKES FOR SOMEBODY THAT SMART.

ANONY-
MOUS

POP

CLICK

"EX-
ACTLY."

"KARIN NANASE DID NOT KILL HER FATHER."

"THEN WHY DID HE INSIST THAT SHE WAS OUT FOR HIS BLOOD?"

"SHE DIDN'T EVEN WANT TO KILL HIM."



"IT WAS
HIM—KARIN
NANASE'S
FATHER—
WHO FRAMED
HER."

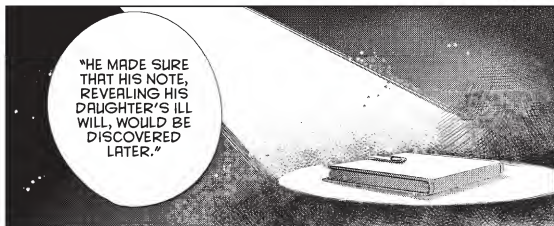
DEADLY FALL

Father
of Karin
Nanase

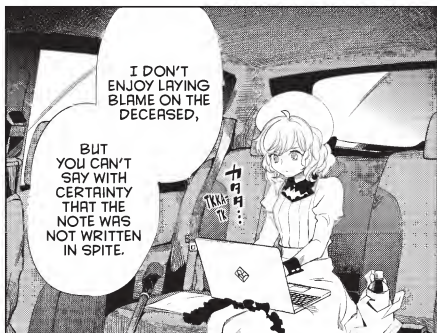
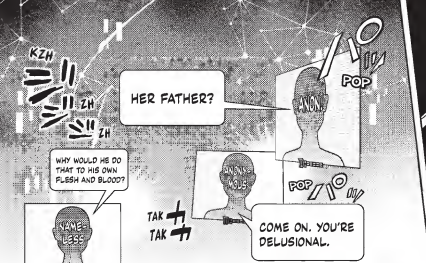


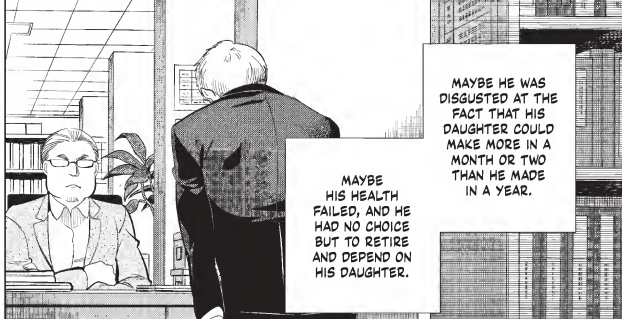
"...SO
HE KILLED
HIMSELF
AND MADE
IT LOOK
LIKE AN
ACCIDENT."

"HE
WANTED TO
CRUSH HIS
DAUGHTER'S
SUCCESS..."



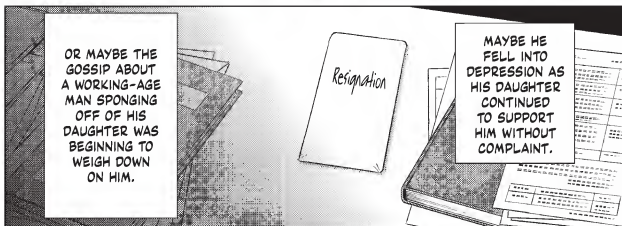
"HE MADE SURE
THAT HIS NOTE,
REVEALING HIS
DAUGHTER'S ILL
WILL, WOULD BE
DISCOVERED
LATER."





MAYBE HE WAS
DISGUSTED AT THE
FACT THAT HIS
DAUGHTER COULD
MAKE MORE IN A
MONTH OR TWO
THAN HE MADE
IN A YEAR.

MAYBE
HIS HEALTH
FAILED, AND HE
HAD NO CHOICE
BUT TO RETIRE
AND DEPEND ON
HIS DAUGHTER.



OR MAYBE THE
GOSSIP ABOUT
A WORKING-AGE
MAN SPONGING
OFF OF HIS
DAUGHTER WAS
BEGINNING TO
WEIGH DOWN
ON HIM.

MAYBE HE
FELL INTO
DEPRESSION AS
HIS DAUGHTER
CONTINUED
TO SUPPORT
HIM WITHOUT
COMPLAINT.



SHE'S
ALWAYS BEEN
SO PROUD OF
HOW MUCH
SMARTER
SHE IS...

HARUKO
LOOKS
AT ME
LIKE I'M
DIRT.

I BELIEVE
IT IS SAFE
TO ASSUME
THAT THE
FATHER WAS
NOT HAPPY
WITH HIS
RELATION-
SHIP WITH HIS
DAUGHTER.



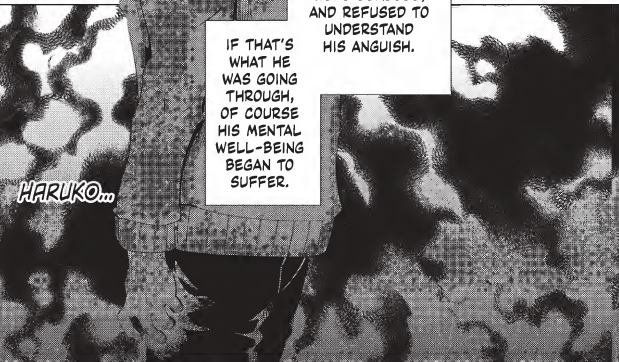
COME ON,
SHE'S YOUR
DAUGHTER. WHAT'S
WRONG WITH YOU?
BADMOUTHING
A NICE GIRL
LIKE HER.

HE UNWILLINGLY
LEFT HIS JOB
DUE TO HEALTH
PROBLEMS
OR LAYOFFS,
AND HE HAD
DIFFICULTY
GAINING NEW
EMPLOYMENT.

BUT HIS
DAUGHTER'S
CONSPICUOUS
STARDOM
HELPED HIM
MAINTAIN HIS
LIFESTYLE,
SO HE GAINED
NO SYMPATHY
FROM HIS
FRIENDS.

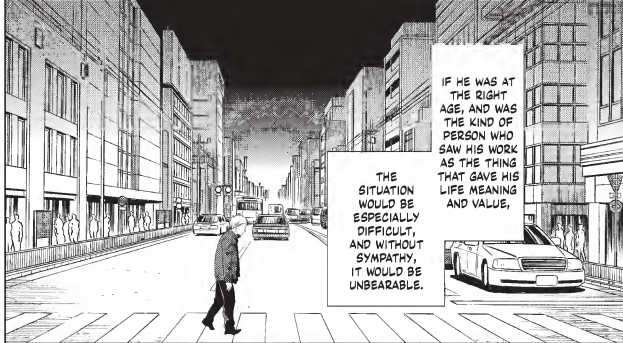


INSTEAD, THEY
WERE JEALOUS,
AND REFUSED TO
UNDERSTAND
HIS ANGUISH.



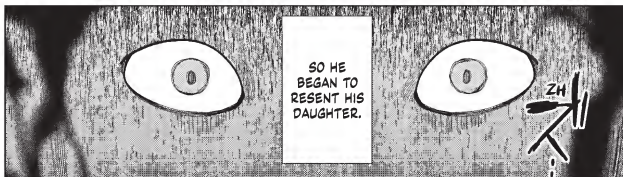
IF THAT'S
WHAT HE
WAS GOING
THROUGH,
OF COURSE
HIS MENTAL
WELL-BEING
BEGAN TO
SUFFER.

HARUKO...

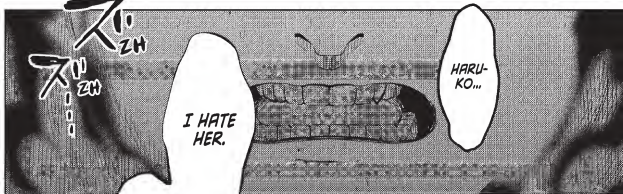


IF HE WAS AT
THE RIGHT
AGE, AND WAS
THE KIND OF
PERSON WHO
SAW HIS WORK
AS THE THING
THAT GAVE HIS
LIFE MEANING
AND VALUE,

THE
SITUATION
WOULD BE
ESPECIALLY
DIFFICULT,
AND WITHOUT
SYMPATHY,
IT WOULD BE
UNBEARABLE.

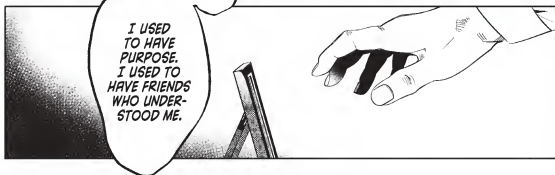


SO HE
BEGAN TO
RESENT HIS
DAUGHTER.



I HATE
HER.

HARU-
KO...



I USED
TO HAVE
PURPOSE.
I USED TO
HAVE FRIENDS
WHO UNDER-
STOOD ME.



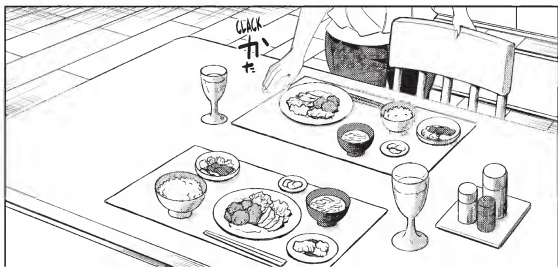
BUT
HARUKO
TOOK THEM
ALL AWAY
FROM ME.

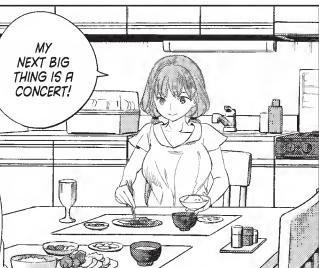


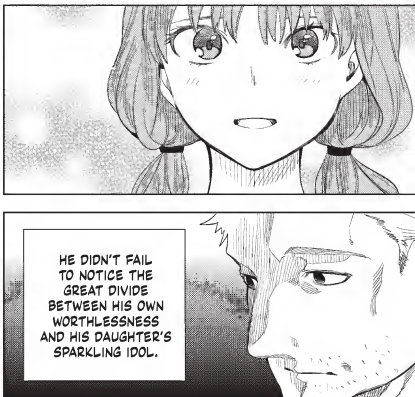
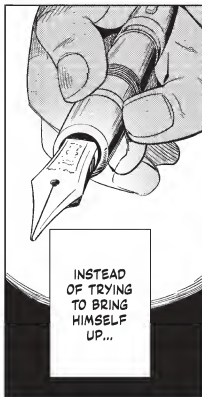
DAD?
ARE YOU
HOME?

COLLEGE IS ON
BREAK AND I
DON'T HAVE
WORK TODAY,
SO HERE I AM.







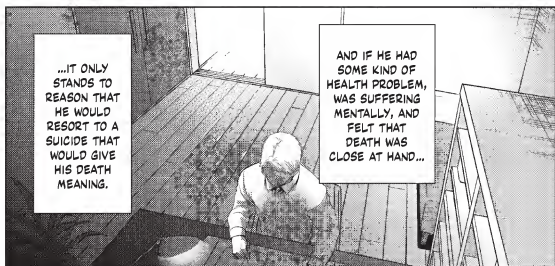




I feel like Haruko wants to kill me.



By the time you read this note,

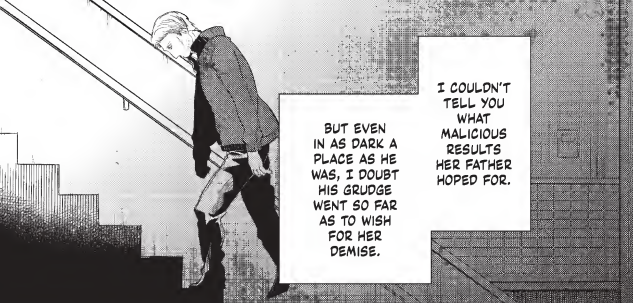


By the time you read this note,

I have no doubt that she will have murdered me.

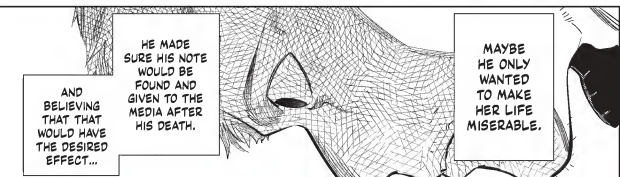
There's no doubt in my mind.





BUT EVEN
IN AS DARK A
PLACE AS HE
WAS, I DOUBT
HIS GRUDGE
WENT SO FAR
AS TO WISH
FOR HER
DEMISE.

I COULDN'T
TELL YOU
WHAT
MALICIOUS
RESULTS
HER FATHER
HOPED FOR.



AND
BELIEVING
THAT THAT
WOULD HAVE
THE DESIRED
EFFECT...

HE MADE
SURE HIS NOTE
WOULD BE
FOUND AND
GIVEN TO THE
MEDIA AFTER
HIS DEATH.

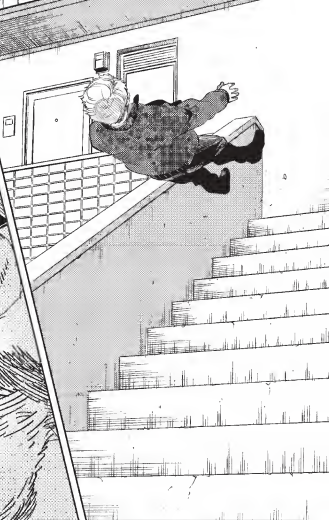
MAYBE
HE ONLY
WANTED
TO MAKE
HER LIFE
MISERABLE.



...HE
DELIB-
ERATELY
FELL
DOWN
THE
STAIRS.



AND HE
GOT WHAT
HE WANTED—
THE RISING STAR
KARIN NANASE
CAME CRASHING
TO EARTH.



...AND
DROVE
KARIN
NANASE
TO THE
EDGE.

THE
ACCUSA-
TIONS
SNOW-
BALLED...

BUT THE
FATHER'S
PLOT
WAS TOO
EFFECTIVE.
THE MEDIA
WAS IN AN
UPROAR.

I feel like Haruko wants to kill me.

By the time you read this note,

I have no doubt that she will have murdered me.

There's no doubt in my mind.



WE'RE
FROM
WEEKLY
CELEBRITY
ZOOM!

HELLO,
NANASE-
SAN.



INCIDENTALLY,
THERE'S A
CERTAIN RUMOR
GOING AROUND
THE INTERNET.
HAVE YOU
HEARD IT?



YOU'RE IN
HIGH DEMAND,
NANASE-SAN—
LINED UP TO
APPEAR IN
MOVIES AND A
TV DRAMA.

AND
YOU'LL BE
PLAYING THE
LEAD IN THAT
DRAMA? I
CAN'T WAIT
TO SEE IT.



NANASE-
SAN!

I'M IN A
HURRY.

OH!

I DON'T
KNOW
ANYTHING
ABOUT IT.

ANY
IDEAS?

WHAT
DO YOU
SUPPOSE
YOUR
FATHER
MEANT?



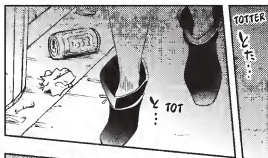
YOUR
FATHER'S
NOTE...

...MADE
IT QUITE
CLEAR...

PLEASE,
NANASE-
SAN! WAIT!

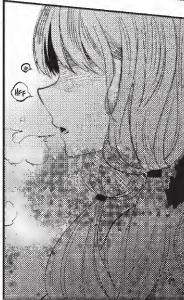


... THAT
YOU WERE
GOING TO
KILL HIM!

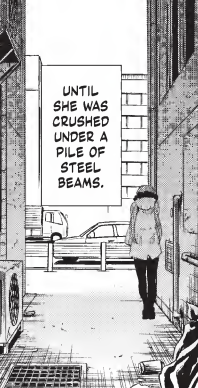


TOTTEN

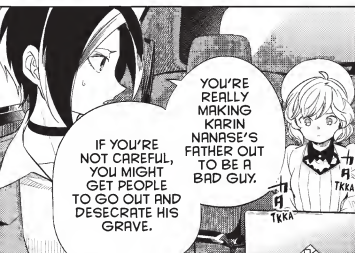
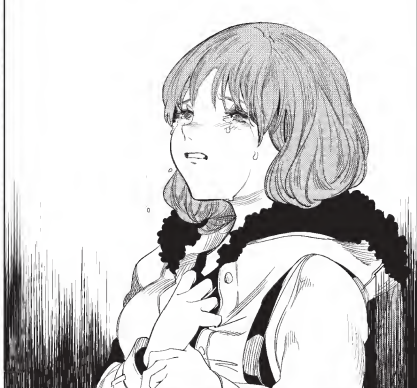
Y... TOT



NANASE-
SAN!

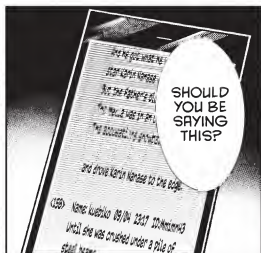


UNTIL
SHE WAS
CRUSHED
UNDER A
PILE OF
STEEL
BEAMS.



IF YOU'RE
NOT CAREFUL,
YOU MIGHT
GET PEOPLE
TO GO OUT AND
DESECRATE HIS
GRAVE.

YOU'RE
REALLY
MAKING
KARIN
NANASE'S
FATHER OUT
TO BE A
BAD GUY.



SHOULD
YOU BE
SAYING
THIS?

and drove Karin Nanase to the edge.

(150) Name: Kurehiko 09/04 23:17 ID:XXXXXXXXX
Until she was crushed under a pile of
steel beams.



BUT
RIGHT
NOW, OUR
PRIORITY IS
TO FINISH
POSTING
THIS SOLU-
TION.

AND I'VE
THOUGHT
OF A WAY
TO SMOOTH
IT OVER.



KARIN
NANASE
WOULD
BE IN THE
SAME
TOMB.

SO
NO ONE
SHOULD
HURT IT.







KARIN
NANASE
LOVED HER
FATHER.

OTHERWISE,
IT WOULD HAVE
BEEN NO SKIN
OFF HER NOSE
IF HE'D THOUGHT
SHE WANTED
TO KILL HIM.

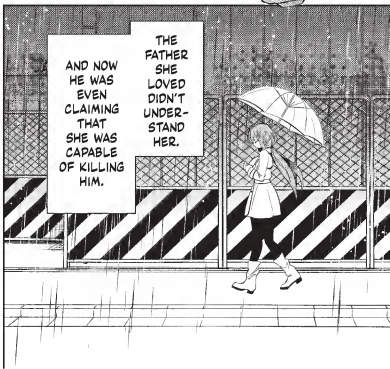


(no title)

Catch you later, dweebs.

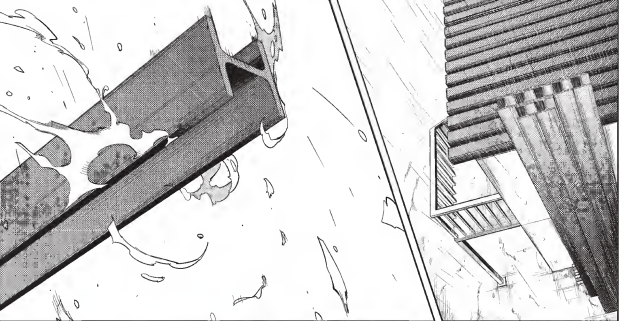


SHE WAS
LEFT IN
DESPAIR.



AND NOW
HE WAS
EVEN
CLAIMING
THAT
SHE WAS
CAPABLE
OF KILLING
HIM.

THE
FATHER
SHE
LOVED
DIDN'T
UNDER-
STAND
HER.



DESPAIR SO
DEEP, SHE
COULDN'T EVEN
MUSTER THE
WILL TO TRY
TO AVOID AN
AVALANCHE OF
STEEL GIRDERS.



I KNOW THIS
STORY IS FAKE,
BUT IT'S TRUE
THAT SHE WAS
NOT HAPPY IN
THE DAYS
LEADING UP
TO HER
DEATH.

WHAT IF
THERE ARE
MORE FACTS
THAT MATCH
UP WITH IWA-
NAGA-SAN'S
STORY?

BAM

TKKA

TKK

TKK

TKK

TKKA

TKKA

TKKA

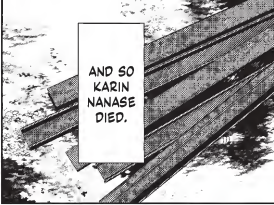


KARIN
NANASE'S
DEATH WAS
AN ACCIDENT
BORDERING
ON SUICIDE...





AND
UPON HER
DEATH, SHE
VISITED THE
AFTERLIFE.



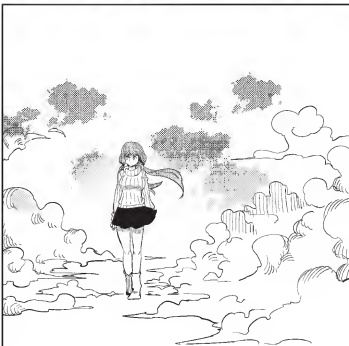
AND SO
KARIN
NANASE
DIED.



Phwah!!



The afterlife.

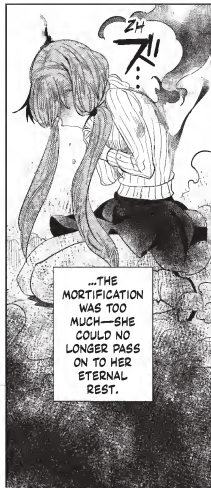


IT'S A CONTRADICTION, AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO RECONCILE IT.

SHE RESIGNS HERSELF TO DEATH BY STEEL BEAMS, BUT THEN COMES BACK AS A GHOST HELL-BENT ON CORRECTING SOME INJUSTICE.



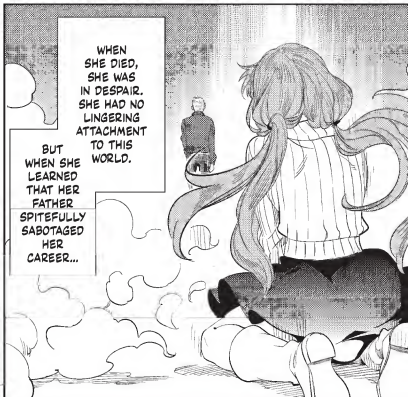
OR RATHER, IT'S ENOUGH TO INCULCATE SOLUTION NUMBER TWO.



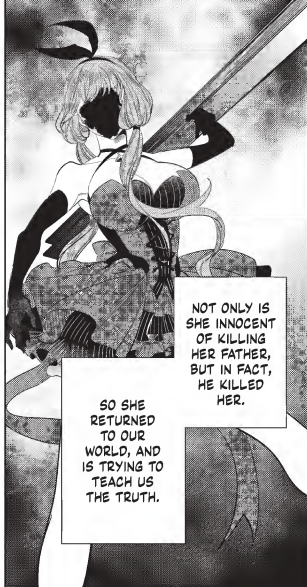
...THE MORTIFICATION WAS TOO MUCH—SHE COULD NO LONGER PASS ON TO HER ETERNAL REST.

WHEN SHE DIED, SHE WAS IN DESPAIR. SHE HAD NO LINGERING ATTACHMENT TO THIS WORLD.

BUT WHEN SHE LEARNED THAT HER FATHER SPITEFULLY SABOTAGED HER CAREER...

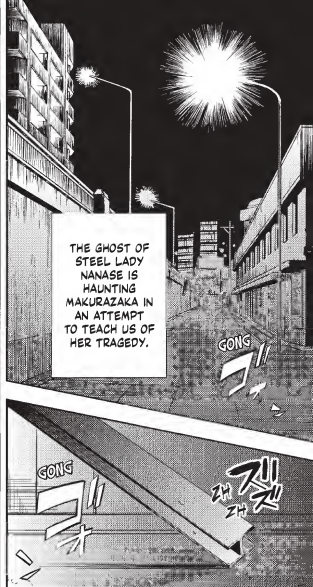






NOT ONLY IS
SHE INNOCENT
OF KILLING
HER FATHER,
BUT IN FACT,
HE KILLED
HER.

SO SHE
RETURNED
TO OUR
WORLD, AND
IS TRYING TO
TEACH US
THE TRUTH.



THE GHOST OF
STEEL LADY
NANASE IS
HAUNTING
MAKURAZAKA IN
AN ATTEMPT
TO TEACH US OF
HER TRAGEDY.

GONG



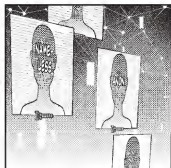
GONG

ZH ZH ZH



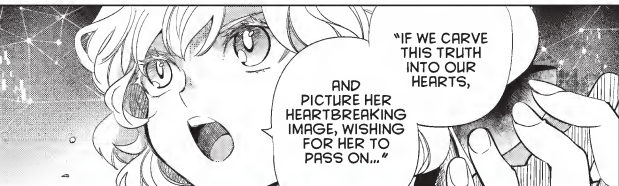
IT IS WHY
SHE HAS
BEEN
REDUCED TO
A HIDEOUS
MONSTER.

KARIN
NANASE
LOVED HER
FATHER, AND
HE BETRAYED
HER. THAT IS
WHAT TURNED
HER INTO
THIS FIEND.



"IF YOU HAVE ANY
PITY FOR KARIN
NANASE, LET US
SPEAK OF HER
AS AN INNOCENT
IDOL..."

...WHO
NEVER KILLED
ANYONE, BUT
ONLY LOVED
HER FATHER."



"IF WE CARVE
THIS TRUTH
INTO OUR
HEARTS,

AND
PICTURE HER
HEARTBREAKING
IMAGE, WISHING
FOR HER TO
PASS ON..."



"...THEN
SURELY
STEEL LADY
NANASE WILL
LEAVE OUR
CITY'S DARK
STREETS."

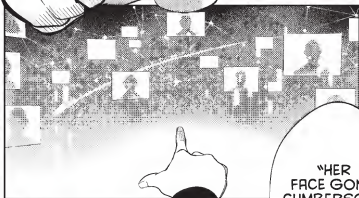


"CAST
YOUR VOTE
IN HER
FAVOR."

"IF YOU
HEAR AND
ACCEPT
HER STORY,
YOU CAN
DISPEL HER
GRIEF."



"WE MUSTN'T
LEAVE HER
TO WANDER
THE NIGHT AS
SUCH A PITIFUL
SPECTRE."



"HER
FACE GONE,
CUMBERSOME
I-BEAM IN
HAND,

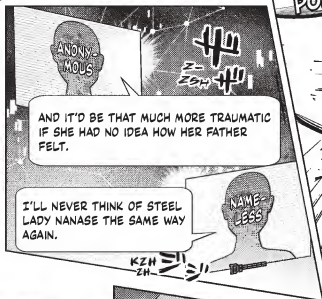


KARIN
NANASE
APPEARS
BEFORE US
IN THAT
PAINFULLY
FLUTTERY
MINISKIRT."



"WILL WE
NOT USE OUR
PRAYERS TO
SEND HER TO
HER HEAVENLY
REST?"



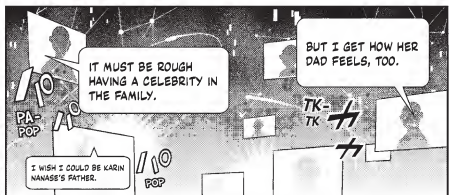
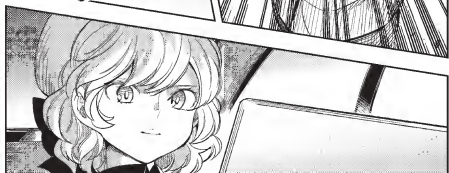


AND IT'D BE THAT MUCH MORE TRAUMATIC
IF SHE HAD NO IDEA HOW HER FATHER
FELT.

I'LL NEVER THINK OF STEEL
LADY NANASE THE SAME WAY
AGAIN.



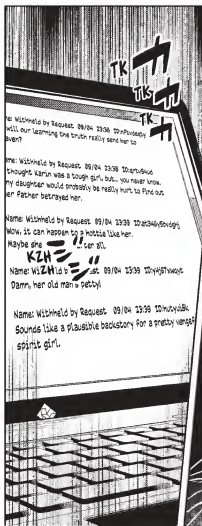
I WANT HER TO
GO TO HEAVEN...



IT MUST BE ROUGH
HAVING A CELEBRITY IN
THE FAMILY.

BUT I GET HOW HER
DAD FEELS, TOO.

I WISH I COULD BE KARIN
NANASE'S FATHER.

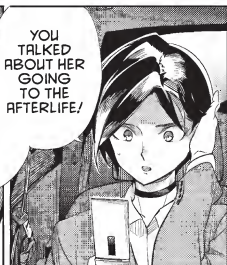




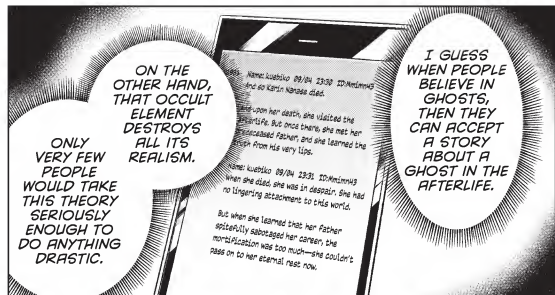
ALTHOUGH
IT DOES
MAKE YOU
FEEL SORRY
FOR KARIN
NANASE.



BUT
THEY'RE
EATING
IT UP!



YOU
TALKED
ABOUT
HER
GOING
TO THE
AFTERLIFE!



ONLY
VERY FEW
PEOPLE
WOULD TAKE
THIS THEORY
SERIOUSLY
ENOUGH TO
DO ANYTHING
DRASTIC.

ON THE
OTHER HAND,
THAT OCCULT
ELEMENT
DESTROYS
ALL ITS
REALISM.

Name: Kuebiko 09/04 23:30 ID: Mmimmg
and so Karin Nanase died.

and upon her death, she visited the
Pearl's life. But once there, she met her
deceased father, and she learned the
truth from his very lips.

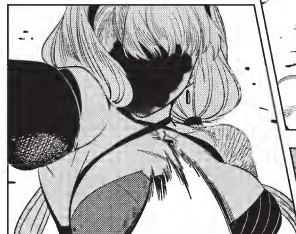
Name: Kuebiko 09/04 23:31 ID: Mmimmg
When she died, she was in despair. She had
no lingering attachment to this world.

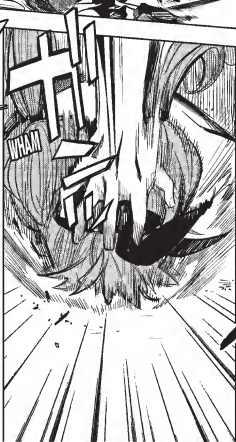
But when she learned that her father
spitefully sabotaged her career, the
mortification was too much—she couldn't
pass on to her eternal rest now.

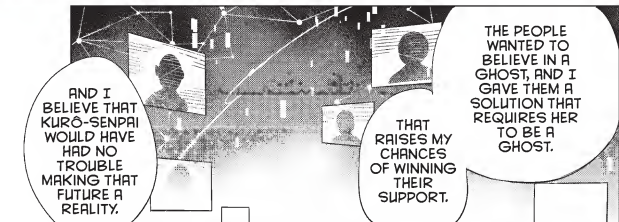
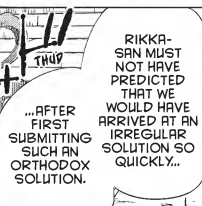
I GUESS
WHEN PEOPLE
BELIEVE IN
GHOSTS,
THEN THEY
CAN ACCEPT
A STORY
ABOUT A
GHOST IN THE
AFTERLIFE.

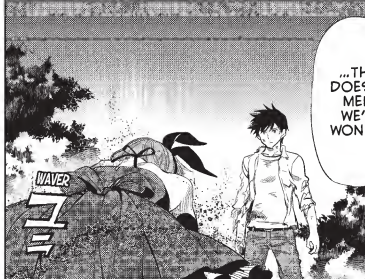


IT'S A
CONCLUSION
THAT ADMITS
THAT STEEL
LADY NANASE IS
A GHOST, BUT
STILL LEADS TO
VICTORY FOR
OUR SIDE.



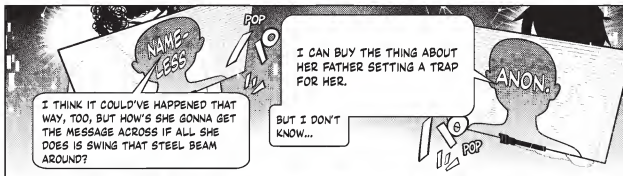






...THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN
WE'VE
WON YET.

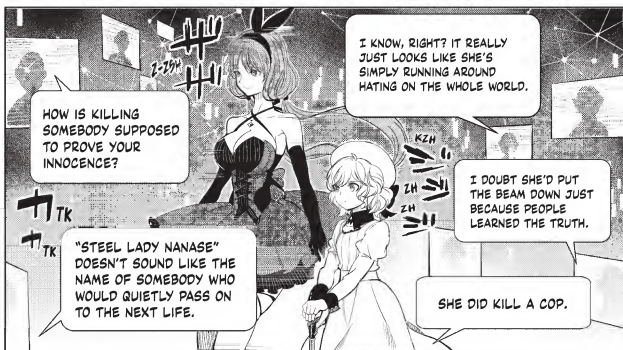
BUT...



I THINK IT COULD'VE HAPPENED THAT
WAY, TOO, BUT HOW'S SHE GONNA GET
THE MESSAGE ACROSS IF ALL SHE
DOES IS SWING THAT STEEL BEAM
AROUND?

I CAN BUY THE THING ABOUT
HER FATHER SETTING A TRAP
FOR HER.

BUT I DON'T
KNOW...



HOW IS KILLING
SOMEBODY SUPPOSED
TO PROVE YOUR
INNOCENCE?

I KNOW, RIGHT? IT REALLY
JUST LOOKS LIKE SHE'S
SIMPLY RUNNING AROUND
HATING ON THE WHOLE WORLD.

"STEEL LADY NANASE"
DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE
NAME OF SOMEBODY WHO
WOULD QUIETLY PASS ON
TO THE NEXT LIFE.

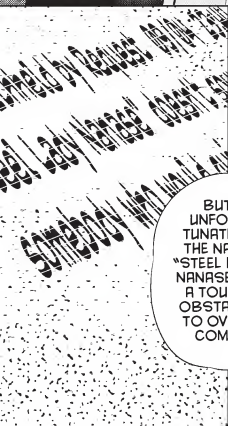
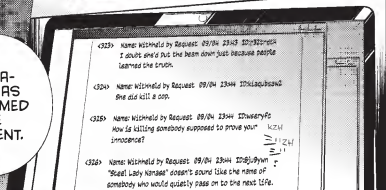
I DOUBT SHE'D PUT
THE BEAM DOWN JUST
BECAUSE PEOPLE
LEARNED THE TRUTH.

SHE DID KILL A COP.





RIKKA-
SAN HAS
RECLAIMED
THE
CURRENT.



BUT
UNFOR-
TUNATELY,
THE NAME
"STEEL LADY
NANASE" IS
A TOUGH
OBSTACLE
TO OVER-
COME.

IF THE
GHOST OF KARIN
NANASE'S APPEAR-
ANCE AND BITTER-
NESS WERE MORE
LIKE A PROPER
SPIRIT'S, SOLUTION
TWO MIGHT HAVE
CLOSED THE
CURTAIN ON
THIS AFFAIR.



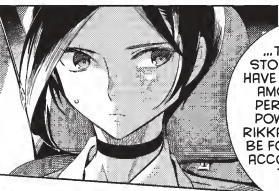
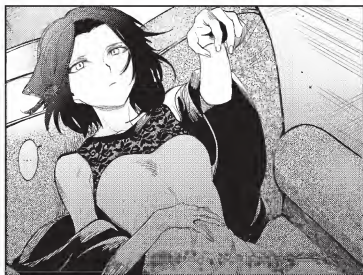
...TO RUN
AROUND IN GET-
UPS LIKE
THAT WITH A
NAME
LIKE HERS.

PEOPLE
DON'T
EXPECT
SPIRITS WITH
THE USUAL
COMPLAINTS
AND
DEMANDS
...



FWOOSH

BUT
ONCE AGAIN,
RIKKA-SAN
HAS FAILED TO
COMPLETELY
VETO MY
STORY.



... THEN MY
STORIES WILL
HAVE A CERTAIN
AMOUNT OF
PERSUASIVE
POWER, AND
RIKKA-SAN WILL
BE FORCED TO
ACCOUNT FOR
THEM.

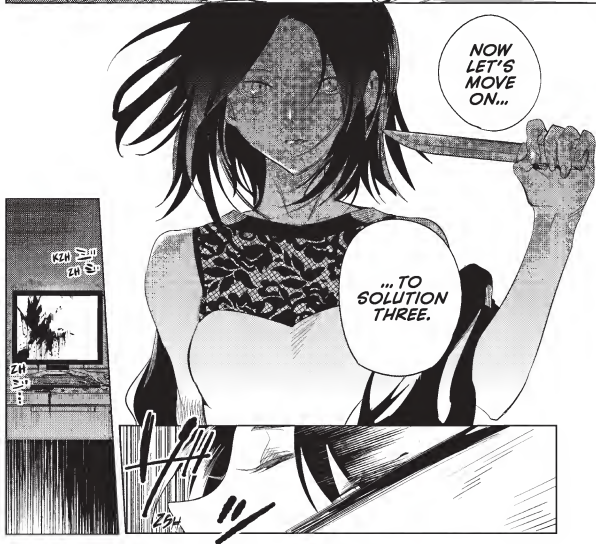


IF I KEEP
SELECTING
STORIES THAT
PEOPLE ON
THE OTHER
SIDE OF THE
SCREEN ARE
LIKELY TO
WANT AND
BELIEVE...



AND DOESN'T EVERYONE LOVE
A STORY WHERE
A HOPELESSLY
OUTNUMBERED
MINORITY...

...COMES
FROM BEHIND
TO DEFEAT
THE OVER-
WHELMING
MAJORITY?



NOW
LET'S
MOVE
ON...

...TO
SOLUTION
THREE.



Please pick up the next volume, too!



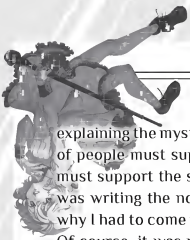
Staff

Asai, Otōtamu, Kuro Shima, Tonpu

Editors

O-kawa, T-da (honorifics excluded)





explaining the mystery. One such condition is that an unspecified number of people must support a proposed solution (and of all the people who must support the solution, the readers are the most important). While I was writing the novel, I was often brought to my wits' end, wondering why I had to come up with a solution that fit all of these difficult criteria. Of course, it was my own fault—I bit off more than I could chew in my attempt to do something elaborate for my first novel in ages.

Then I was afraid to see how well people received it when it was published, and I did end up getting a lot of people saying, “I don’t think you stuck the landing.” So, of course, now that there are manga readers seeing this story for the first time, I’m scared to see how they feel about it. I’m nervous. There are two solutions left; I personally think I was very careful to make sure that these multiple solutions seemed inevitable.

Of course, when I talk like this, it sounds like I’m taking my mystery writing seriously, but I’ve already established that all four of my solutions are false; I have an immortal young man fighting a young girl (ghost) who brandishes a steel beam; and he’s taking this young, busty girl (ghost) and mercilessly slamming her into the ground. So at this point I still can’t help it if people are going to ask me, “And this is supposed to be a mystery story?”

The time may come when Katase-sensei, the manga’s artist, will snap back to reality and ask, “What in the world kind of manga am I drawing?” I wonder what Sensei says when family and relatives ask, “So what kind of manga are you working on?”

Now, where will this battle of dueling fictions go in the next volume?

We’re almost there—I hope you’ll stay with us.

Kyo Shirodaira

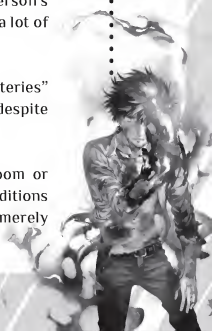
I am the author, Kyo Shirodaira (I don’t really do anything), and this is volume five. The novel was contained in a single volume of moderate thickness, but this version is now in its fifth volume. Nevertheless, we have reached the latter half of the latter half. If we were to use a year as our analogy, then we’re in about October or November. Will we make it to the new year in one piece?

In this volume, our manga is behaving like a proper mystery, going into the summation, where we present solutions, about things, like who done it. Then that solution is rejected, so we present a new one, and then we repeat the process a few times; in the mystery world, we call that “multiple solutions.”

In a long mystery that handles one case, there are multiple suspects; they arrest one, claiming that he or she is the killer (solution one), but then some evidence appears proving they didn’t do it, so they direct their suspicion at someone else (solution two). It’s a fairly common formula. Another common formula is when the police will arrest a certain person and put them on trial, claiming that they had motive and means, but the defense attorney or detective will find the real killer in order to prove the first person’s innocence. So in a broad sense, you can’t deny that a lot of mystery stories have multiple solutions.

The stories that best embody “multiple solution mysteries” are those where multiple solutions are presented, despite the extreme difficulty in doing so.

In this story, although it’s not a classic closed-room or airtight-alibi mystery, we’ve assigned various conditions that our multiple solutions must satisfy, aside from merely

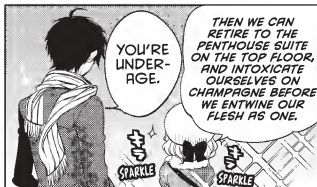




WHERE SHOULD WE HAVE DINNER?

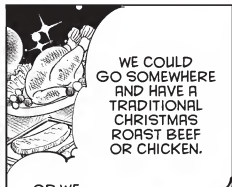
TOMORROW IS CHRISTMAS EVE.

KURŌ-SENPAI.



YOU'RE UNDER-AGE.

THEN WE CAN RETIRE TO THE PENTHOUSE SUITE ON THE TOP FLOOR, AND INTOXICATE OURSELVES ON CHAMPAGNE BEFORE WE ENTWINE OUR FLESH AS ONE.



WE COULD GO SOMEWHERE AND HAVE A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS ROAST BEEF OR CHICKEN.



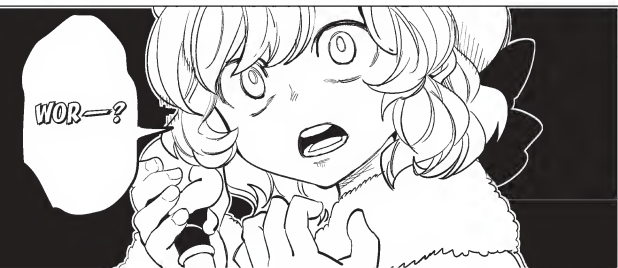
WHA—?!

BUT I HAVE PLANS TOMORROW. I CAN'T GET OUT OF THEM.

AND, ACTUALLY, SORRY,



OR WE COULD GO TO A RESTAURANT AT A LUXURY HOTEL.



DECEMBER 24







KURÔ-
KUN, SHE'S
STARING!



MERRY
CHRIST-
MAS!

YOUR
GIRLFRIEND
IS REALLY
STARING US
DOWN!



AS IF THE
GUY WHO
STUFFED HIMSELF
ON YOKAI MEAT
HAS ANY RIGHT
TO TALK ABOUT
RELIGION.

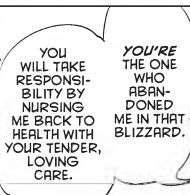
BESIDES, IF
ANYTHING,
WE'RE
BUDDHIST,
RIGHT?

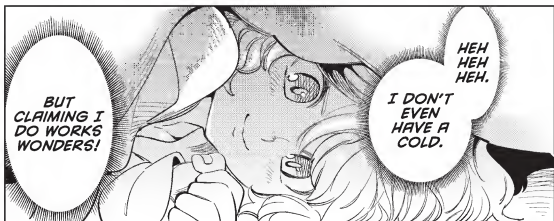


HE
ASKED
ME
FIRST.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
YOU
REALLY
PUT YOUR
JOB
BEFORE
ME!









THE OTHER
SPECTRES
WILL BE
ARRIVING
FORTHWITH!

I, A
HUMBLE
FALLEN
SOLDIER,
WILL
NURSE
YOU
BACK TO
HEALTH!

HOW
CAN YOU
SUGGEST
SUCH A
THING?

GO
AWAY!
*It's
just
getting
good!!*

AS
YOU
CAN
SEE...

NO!
I'M
FINE,
JUST
GO!

...I'M FIT
AS A
FIDDLE!!

AAH...
AAAHHH!

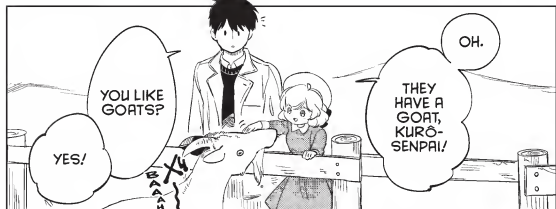
DON'T
MIND IF
I DO.

SEN-
PAI...

WOULD
YOU LIKE
SOME RICE
PORRIDGE,
TOO, FALLEN
SOLDIER-
SAN?

THE END

"GOAT"

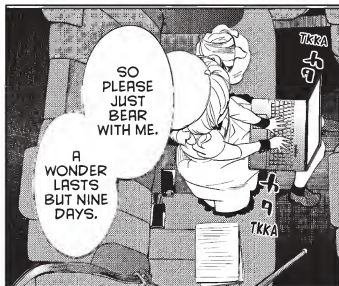


GOAT TRIVIA



GOATS DON'T HAVE ANY FRONT TEETH ON THEIR UPPER JAW!

TRANSLATION NOTES

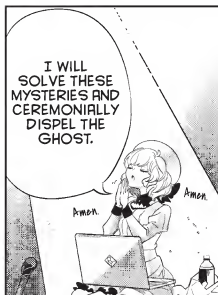


A wonder lasts but nine days, page 57

This phrase refers to the fact that the whole affair will blow over before long. The nine-day version is more common in the English-speaking world, but the Japanese idiom is more accurately translated as, "Gossip lasts 75 days," which is roughly a fifth of the year.

Amen, page 97

The translators chose a word here that is generally associated with prayers in the West, but the reader may reasonably expect that Kotoko used a more Far-Eastern prayer. Specifically, she said *namu*, which is a shortened version of a Buddhist chant that means, "I trust all to Amitabha." Amitabha is the principal Buddha in the Pure Land Sect of Buddhism, and since Buddhism is one of the majority religions of Japan, Kotoko would naturally commend Karin Nanase's soul to a Buddhist higher power.



**Karin Nanase
would be in the
same tomb,
page 125**

In Japan, the bodies of the deceased are usually cremated. The ashes are placed in urns, which are then kept in a chamber under a single tombstone shared by a family. Ergo, Karin Nanase and her father would have been buried in the same grave.



**Christmas Eve,
page 154**

In Japan, Christmas Eve is celebrated as a romantic holiday for people to spend a lovely evening with their significant others. It is also a family holiday with many traditions borrowed from the West (although the turkey is replaced with chicken), so if someone is single, he or she isn't consigned to a miserable night, but in general, the night is treated very much like Valentine's Day in the West.

A new series from the creator of *Soul Eater*, the megahit manga and anime seen on Toonami!

"Fun and lively...
a great start!"

-Adventures in
Poor Taste

FIRE FORCE

By Atsushi Ohkubo

The city of Tokyo is plagued by a deadly phenomenon: spontaneous human combustion! Luckily, a special team is there to quench the inferno: The Fire Force! The fire soldiers at Special Fire Cathedral 8 are about to get a unique addition. Enter Shinra, a boy who possesses the power to run at the speed of a rocket, leaving behind the famous "devil's footprints" (and destroying his shoes in the process). Can Shinra and his colleagues discover the source of this strange epidemic before the city burns to ashes?

The award-winning manga about what happens inside you!

“Far more entertaining than it ought to be... what kid doesn't want to think that every time they sneeze a torpedo shoots out their nose?”

—Anime News Network



Strep throat! Hay fever! Influenza! The world is a dangerous place for a red blood cell just trying to get her deliveries finished. Fortunately, she's not alone...she's got a whole human body's worth of cells ready to help out! The mysterious white blood cells, the buff and brash killer T cells, even the cute little platelets—everyone's got to come together if they want to keep you healthy!

Cells at Work!

はたらく細胞



The Black Museum ^{The} Ghost and the Lady

By Kazuhiro Fujita

Deep in Scotland Yard in London sits an evidence room dedicated to the greatest mysteries of British history. In this “Black Museum” sits a misshapen hunk of lead—two bullets fused together—the key to a wartime encounter between Florence Nightingale, the mother of modern nursing, and a supernatural Man in Grey. This story is unknown to most scholars of history, but a special guest of the museum will tell the tale of *The Ghost and the Lady*...

Praise for Kazuhiro Fujita's *Ushio and Tora*

“A charming revival that combines a classic look with modern depth and pacing... **Essential viewing both for curmudgeons and new fans alike.**” — Anime News Network

“**GREAT!** The first episode of *Ushio and Tora* captures the essence of '90s anime.” — IGN

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H A P P I N E S S

——ハピネス——

By Shuzo Oshimi

From the creator of *The Flowers of Evil*

Nothing interesting is happening in Makoto Ozaki's first year of high school. His life is a series of quiet humiliations: low-grade bullies, unreliable friends, and the constant frustration of his adolescent lust. But one night, a pale, thin girl knocks him to the ground in an alley and offers him a choice.

Now everything is different. Daylight is searingly bright. Food tastes awful. And worse than anything is the terrible, consuming thirst...

Praise for Shuzo Oshimi's *The Flowers of Evil*

"A shockingly readable story that vividly—one might even say queasily—evokes the fear and confusion of discovering one's own sexuality. Recommended." —The Manga Critic

"A page-turning tale of sordid middle school blackmail." —Otaku USA Magazine

"A stunning new horror manga." —Third Eye Comics



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COMICS

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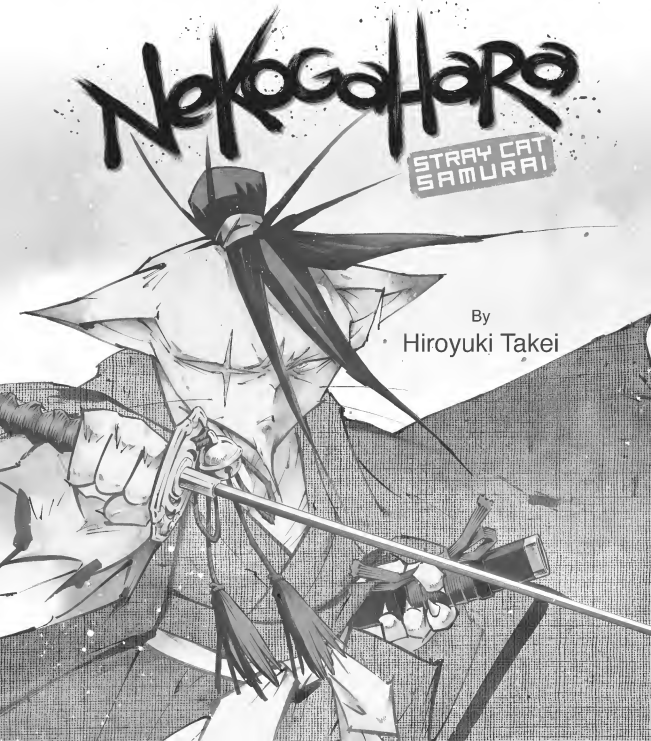
*New action series from Hiroyuki Takei, creator of
the classic shonen franchise Shaman King!*

In medieval Japan, a bell hanging on the collar is a sign that a cat has a master. Norachiyo's bell hangs from his katana sheath, but he is nonetheless a stray — a ronin. This one-eyed cat samurai travels across a dishonest world, cutting through pretense and deception with his blade.

NekoGallaro

STRAY CAT
SAMURAI

By
Hiroyuki Takei



"*Parasyte* fans should get a kick out of the chance to revisit Iwaaki's weird, violent, strangely affecting universe. Recommended." -Otaku USA Magazine

"A great anthology containing an excellent variety of genres and styles." -Manga Bookshelf

Based on the critically acclaimed classic horror manga

The first new *Parasyte* manga in
over 20 years!

NEO Parasyte

BY ASUMIKO NAKAMURA, EMA TOYAMA, MIKI RINNO, LALAKO KOJIMA, KAORI YUKI,
BANKO KUZE, YUUKI OBATA, KASHIO, YUI KUROE, ASIA WATANABE, MIKIMAKI,
HIKARU SURUGA, HAJIME SHINJO, RENJURO KINDAICHI, AND YURI NARUSHIMA

A collection of chilling new *Parasyte* stories from Japan's top shojo artists!

Parasites: shape-shifting aliens whose only purpose is to assimilate with and consume the human race... but do these monsters have a different side? A parasite becomes a prince to save his romance-obsessed female host from a dangerous stalker. Another hosts a cooking show, in which the real monsters are revealed. These and 13 more stories, from some of the greatest shojo manga artists alive today, together make up a chilling, funny, and entertaining tribute to one of manga's horror classics!

© Hitoshi Iwaaki, Asumiko Nakamura, Ema Toyama, Miki Rinno, Lalako Kojima, Kaori Yuki, Banko Kuze, Yuuki Obata, Kashio, Yui Kuroe, Asia Watanabe, Mikimaki, Hikaru Suruga, Hajime Shinjo, Renjuro Kindaichi, Yuri Narushima/Kodansha Ltd. All rights reserved.



"I'm pleasantly surprised to find modern shojo using cross-dressing as a dramatic device to deliver social commentary...
— Recommended."

—Otaku USA
Magazine



The prince in his dark days

By Hico Yamanaka

A drunkard for a father, a household of poverty... For 17-year-old Atsuko, misfortune is all she knows and believes in. Until one day, a chance encounter with Itaru—the wealthy heir of a huge corporation—changes everything. The two look identical, uncannily so. When Itaru curiously goes missing, Atsuko is roped into being his stand-in. There, in his shoes, Atsuko must parade like a prince in a palace. She encounters many new experiences, but at what cost...?

Having lost his wife, high school teacher Kōhei Inuzuka is doing his best to raise his young daughter Tsumugi as a single father. He's pretty bad at cooking and doesn't have a huge appetite to begin with, but chance brings his little family together with one of his students, the lonely Kotori. The three of them are anything but comfortable in the kitchen, but the healing power of home cooking might just work on their grieving hearts.

"This season's number-one feel-good anime!" —Anime News Network

"A beautifully-drawn story about comfort food and family and grief. Recommended." —Otaku USA Magazine



sweetness & lightning

KC
KODANSHA
COMICS

By Gido Amagakure

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In/Spectre 5

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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